

quæ amarulenta nostra degustatio facta est: unica in perferendo cruciatu animi æquitate ac lenitate. Si osculo prodatur, coarguit quidem, sed non percutit: si vitio corripitur, ita exprobrat, ut tamen quatur: si zelo inflammatus Malchi autem gladio præcideret loco suo relictus profugiat, et domesticum advenit, poposcis, si filatrum oblatum acceperit, eundem radifum introducit, infirmitati benigna ostendit, infirmitati passiones: quod majus ac præfatus mortem ipsa tulit, nos confas & injurias amamus? Quin hæc enim, atque etiam in (videte) de quibus differui. Hi domus: hi templa, ne quod viva vivit timæ vivæ, holo

trificia perfecta, Dii denique, Trinitatis orata beneficio. Hi populos habent, nos angelos: hi temeritatem & audaciam, nos em: hi minas, nos orationes: hi quod periciunt, nos quod ferimus: hi aurum & argentum, nos repurgatam doctrinam. Fecit tibi 42 duplices & triplices contignationes (agnosce Scripturæ verba) domum fratilem, fenestris distinctam: at hæcendum fide mea sublimiora sunt, nec cœ ad quos tendo. At mihi grex exiguus? in præcipitia non fertur. At angusta micaula? sed quæ lupis non pateat, sed quæ ronem non admittat, nec a furibus, & exis transcendatur. Nec dubito quin eam quoque latiore aliquando visurus sim. Multos enim ex his, qui nunc in luporum mero sunt, inter oves, ac fortasse etiam inter pastores, recensendos habeo. Hoc 41 mihi fauste nunciat pastor ille bonus: ob

δι' ὧν τ' πικρὰν ρεῦσιν ἐξεραπειούθη· τῆς ἐν τῷ πάθῃ μακροθυμίας· ἀντιπροδοθῇ. ἐλέγχει μὲν, ὃ πλὴν ἄφνω συλληφθῇ, ὀνειδίζει μὲν, ἐπεὶ μαχαίρα Μάλχῃ τέμνης τὸ ὥτι

ἀποκαταστήσει· καὶ ἀντιπρὸς ἀγониᾶς, καὶ διὰ κακίαν καὶ εἰσάξει διὰ λαμβρώπῃ, καὶ ὃ παθημάτων Θεῷ καὶ θανάτῳ ὁμοίοις μηδὲ πρὸς δὲ καὶ τὸ ὅμαι, καὶ σκοπὸν πολλάνις υἱοῖς τοῖς οἴκῃς, ἡμεῖς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ ζῶντα καὶ λογικὰ ἀδὲ πρὸς

# THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH



IBERIAN FATHERS  
VOLUME I  
MARTIN OF BRAGA  
PASCHASIUS OF DUMIUM  
LEANDER OF SEVILLE

Translated by Claude W. Barlow

ἔτοι δῆμῃς, ἡμεῖς ἀγγέλῃς· ἔτοι πῶς ἡμεῖς· ἔτοι τὸ ἀπειλῆν, ἡμεῖς εὐχεσθαι· ἔτοι τὸ βάλλειν, ἡμεῖς ἔτοι χρυσὸν καὶ ἄργυρον, ἡμεῖς λαμβανόμενοι. ἐποίησας σεαυτῶν διώροφον; γινώσκει τὰ ῥήματα τὰ γραφιστὸν, διεσαλμένον θυρίσιν, ἀλλ' ἔτι ἐμῆς πίστεως ὑψηλότερα καὶ τὰ ἔξω φέρομαι. μικρὸν μοι τὸ ποίμνιον ἐπὶ κρημνῶν φερόμενον. σενή μου πλὴν λύκοις ἀνεπίστα, πλὴν δεχομένη λησὴν, ὃ δὲ ὑπερβαινομένη καὶ ξένοις. ὅφωμαι ταύτην εὐοδῆσαι τυτέραν, πολλὰς καὶ τῶν νυνὶ λύκοις βάτοισι ἀριθμῆσαι με δεῖ τυχόν καὶ τὸ εὐαγγελίζεται μοι ὁ ποιμὴν

*THE FATHERS  
OF THE CHURCH*

A NEW TRANSLATION

VOLUME 62

# THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

ROY JOSEPH DEFERRARI  
*Editorial Director Emeritus*

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# *IBERIAN FATHERS*

VOLUME I

## *MARTIN OF BRAGA PASCHASIUS OF DUMIUM LEANDER OF SEVILLE*

*Translated by*  
CLAUDE W. BARLOW

*Clark University*  
*Worcester, Massachusetts*



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## FOREWORD

Up to now, the only considerable contributions to this series made by writers native to the Iberian peninsula have been the works of Orosius and Prudentius contained in three volumes (43, 50, 52). For possible later translation there remain, among writers prior to the middle of the fifth century, Hosius (Ossius) of Cordova, Potamius and Epiphanius of Seville, Gregory of Elvira, Pacianus of Barcelona, Pope Damasus with his verse inscriptions for the tombs of martyrs, and the metrical Gospel harmony of Juvenius.

This volume and the sequel that is immediately to follow it (the latter to offer Braulio of Saragossa and Fructuosus of Braga) bring us a portion of the writings listed in the Dekkers *Clavis patrum latinorum* as coming from "Scriptores Hispaniae" of two periods, that from the council of Chalcedon to Gregory the Great and that from Isidore to Bede. While Professor Barlow's translations embrace a considerable portion of the writing of these two periods, they leave a great deal untouched; apart from a dozen or more minor writers, they do not include Eugene and Julian of Toledo, Taio of Saragossa, Valerius of Bierzo—and especially the great Isidore himself. Some provision for this the most influential of Hispano-Latin writers must be made, especially after the enlightening *aperçu* provided by Professor Jacques Fontaine of the Sorbonne in his edition of Isidore's *De natura rerum* (Bordeaux 1960) and the companion work, *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique* (2 vols., Paris 1959).

A note of national and local pride may perhaps be permitted here. Among the authors that Professor Barlow translates for us, the most outstanding is the oldest, St. Martin of

Braga. It was Barlow's own critical edition of Martin's works, published in 1950 for the American Academy in Rome by the Yale University Press, that motivated his collaboration with this series. On another of his authors, Bishop Braulio, the leading monograph comes from the Right Reverend Monsignor Charles H. Lynch, a doctoral dissertation from The Catholic University of America (1938) written under the direction of the Right Reverend Monsignor Aloysius K. Ziegler, Professor of History. Monsignor Ziegler's direction of this and other dissertations and his own studies as well have illuminated many a dark corner of the period from which our "Iberian Fathers" come. Finally, another American scholar, the Reverend Joseph M.-F. Marique, S.J., has conceived and effected an important fresh approach to Hispano-Latin writers and other Iberian *viri illustres* of the first six Christian centuries—the prosopographical studies contained in a volume of his editing, *Leaders of Iberian Christianity 50-650 A.D.* (Boston 1962) and the related papers that give authority and distinction to the periodical *Classical Folia*.

BERNARD M. PEEBLES  
*Editorial Director*

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*WRITINGS  
OF  
MARTIN OF BRAGA*



## INTRODUCTION

BOUT THE YEAR 550, a ship from the Holy Land arrived at a harbor on the western coast of what is now Portugal, carrying among its passengers a young missionary named Martin who was destined to play an important role in the history of the Catholic Church among the people called Sueves. Of Martin's earlier life, we know only that he was born in Pannonia, part of which is now Hungary, and that he was educated in the East, where Greek was the common language. His training as a monk was based on the model of the ascetics in the Egyptian desert, but he realized that such a strict life could not be followed by the religious-minded Spaniards, and he lessened the severity of monastic regulations, just as Cassian had adapted oriental living for the Gauls.<sup>1</sup>

The Sueves in northwestern Spain had long been politically independent of the Visigoths, but Catholicism in their territory was mostly dominated by the Priscillianist heresy. It is reported that a king received Christian baptism in 448, but

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<sup>1</sup> Full details of the ancient sources for the life of St. Martin of Braga are found in the first chapter and the appendices of *Martini Episcopi Bracarenensis opera omnia* (ed. C. W. Barlow, New Haven 1950). All the texts here translated are based on the editions in that volume, with a few small corrections from notes by reviewers. The projected new edition of Martin of Braga by A. Moreira de Sá of the University of Lisbon and Arnaldo Miranda Barbosa of the University of Coimbra will undoubtedly add much of importance from manuscripts now preserved in Spain and Portugal. Contemporary sources, in addition to Martin's own works and a metrical epitaph, include a dedication by Paschasius, monk of Martin's monastery at Dumium, a letter and a poem from Venantius Fortunatus, two references in works of Gregory of Tours, and the important chapter 35 in Isidore of Seville's *De viris illustribus*. The exact dates of the elevation and the death of Martin have been preserved in a breviary in use at the Cathedral of Braga. All of these are printed in full in the Appendices of the edition just mentioned.



this had little effect on the religious affairs of his realm. Profuturus was Bishop of Braga in 538, and we have a letter to him from Pope Vigilius, from which we know that, shortly before Martin's arrival, the way was being prepared for the tremendous strides which he achieved. Martin settled first at Dumium, a short distance from the capital at Braga, where he founded a monastery, and where he was created bishop on April 5, 556. Just two years later, a new basilica was dedicated there in honor of Martin's namesake, St. Martin of Tours. Martin of Dumium signed his name third among the eight bishops who attended the First Council of Braga in May, 561. Priscillianism was vigorously attacked in the minutes of this Council.

When the Second Council of Braga met in June, 572, Martin had become, during this period of eleven years, the metropolitan bishop of the church provinces of Braga and Lugo and was probably in charge of both Braga and Dumium. The Council was attended by six bishops from Braga and six from Lugo.

Martin's direct influence on this Council is shown by several of the canons, which are adapted from those of Eastern churches, and by a special collection of canons made on this occasion, mostly translated from Greek. Martin still had nine more years of work, for his death is recorded in the Braga breviary on March 20, 579.<sup>2</sup>

There is no hint in any of Martin's surviving works of impending political disaster; yet by 583, the Sueves had completely lost their independence to the Visigoths, and for a brief

<sup>2</sup> Many literary histories give the year of his death as 580, because the references in Gregory of Tours are inexact. The date in the breviary seems to have been based on a contemporary record made locally and is probably precise. It is of interest that a funerary sculpture in the Braga Museum has been published by G. Gaillard in the *Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France 1950-51* (Paris 1954) 191-195 and pl. V. The figures represent Christ in a halo of glory, supported and surrounded by winged angels. Gaillard believes, in consideration of the date of this sarcophagus, that it may have belonged to St. Martin's own tomb.

period the ruling church was Arian, until Leovigild, at his death in 586, is said to have adopted the Catholic faith, which he passed on to his son. These events appear not to have hindered the influence of Martin of Braga in later years. His writings on various subjects were, as we shall see, widely spread through many parts of Europe, and even in Spain his influence was felt in the Church; for the Tenth Council of Toledo in 656 heard his will read, as Martin had directed to be done whenever there was a new king. Unfortunately, no one recorded for future generations the provisions which were made in the will for the benefit of the Church.

The works of St. Martin of Braga, here treated individually, are in chronological order, so far as that can be determined.<sup>3</sup>

### *Sayings of the Egyptian Fathers*

Among the books which Martin carried with him on the journey from the Orient to Spain, one was most certainly a manuscript in Greek containing a collection of the anecdotes of the ascetic monks of Egypt. It was a very extensive collection and apparently arranged by subject matter into books and chapters, in form very much like those translated into Latin by Pelagius and John the Deacon and published as Books V and VI of the *Vitae Patrum*.<sup>4</sup>

Since Martin seems never to have written a Rule of religious

<sup>3</sup> A fresh account of all the works here translated, accompanied by a study of Martin's philosophical and theological thought, may be found in ch. 8 of Mário Martins, S.J., *Correntes da filosofia religiosa em Braga dos séc. IV a VII* (Porto 1950).

<sup>4</sup> Edited by H. Rosweyde (Antwerp 1615), reprinted in PL 73. A systematized arrangement of the original Greek *apophthegmata* under twenty spiritual themes for a monk's guidance has been very recently demonstrated by Jean-Claude Guy, S.J., *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Bruxelles 1962). The earliest known Greek text in this form is an incomplete manuscript of the ninth century, and none has ever been published. The final chapter is also found in Jean-Claude Guy, S.J., "La collation des douze anachorètes," *Analecta Bollandiana* 25 (1958) 419-427.

conduct for his monks at Dumium, this material may have taken the place of such formal precepts. Certainly, the work was known to the monks there, for before 556 an extensive portion, probably the whole manuscript, had been translated by the monk Paschasius, who had been taught by Martin to read Greek. A little later, Martin made his own translation, consisting of 109 very brief selections, all intended to serve as moral instruction. Many of the fascinating anecdotes of life in the Egyptian desert are omitted in order to emphasize the ethics which they illustrated, and a large number of the selections contain but a single statement of sententious nature. Some twenty-two paragraphs are also included in the common, shorter version of Paschasius,<sup>5</sup> and it is possible that Martin here depended upon that translation, but there is enough difference in words to make an independent translation more probable. The table in my edition<sup>6</sup> shows where the original Greek has been preserved in manuscripts. It is interesting to note that Martin's translation is quite literal, that it employs a colloquial type of Latin, and even occasionally introduces idioms that are Greek, such as the genitive object with certain verbs of remembering which ordinarily take the accusative in Latin.

A full account of the manuscripts and tradition of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* may be found in the introduction to the edition here translated.<sup>7</sup> The only version of Martin's work known to me in any language is a Portuguese translation in Caetano do Amaral's edition, 1803, pp. 257-282, which has the translation in columns facing the Latin text. There are five pages of selections in English in a delightful book by Helen Waddell.<sup>8</sup> The present English translation is the first complete one ever made, so far as I know. I have

<sup>5</sup> Below, pp. 117-171; cf. my edition of *Martini*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 14-16.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 11-28. The most recent bibliography on the founders of Egyptian monasticism is in Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* III (Westminster, Md. 1960) 187-189.

<sup>8</sup> *The Desert Fathers* 211-216.

omitted the words placed within square brackets in my edition, since they appear not to be part of Martin's own text.

*Driving Away Vanity; Pride; Exhortation to Humility*

Of a similar general nature but more limited in subject matter are three moral treatises which borrow quite heavily from Cassian's *Conferences* and *Institutes*. Details of this debt were given in the footnotes of my edition, and further parallels have been mentioned by some reviewers.<sup>9</sup> It is probable that the extent of Martin's dependence on earlier writers has not yet been fully revealed. These essays treat of vanity and pride, two of Cassian's eight vices, and conclude with an appeal to humility, by which these vices may be overcome. There is nothing to indicate the period of Martin's life in which they were written, but they are given, first, in the Escorial manuscript which alone has preserved several of Martin's works in a group. The addressee is, for the most part, a person distinguished only by a general pronoun of the second person, though occasionally he is identified more specifically as a temporal ruler. The three essays appear to form two negative elements and a positive statement of related themes. They remained completely unknown until the sixteenth century. The first edition was by Tamayo de Salazar in 1652. The only translation known to me in any language is, again, the Portuguese version by do Amaral.<sup>10</sup>

*Councils and Canons*

On May 1, 561, the First Council of Braga met under Lucretius, then metropolitan bishop. There were representa-

<sup>9</sup> New textual emendations are suggested in A. Kurfess, "Textkritisches zu Martini episcopi Bracaraensis opera," *Athenaeum* 32 (1954) 404-409.

<sup>10</sup> Pp. 182-203.

tives from seven other churches, including Martin from Dumium. The members of the Council studied previous articles of faith and canons of earlier Councils on methods of attacking Priscillianism, to which they devoted almost all of their attention. Other decrees concern local administrative problems.

The Second Council of Braga convened June 1, 572, with Martin in charge and eleven other bishops present. They studied many texts which gave instructions in the duties of a bishop, and adapted for their current needs ten earlier canons on the same subject.

I have discussed in my edition<sup>11</sup> the problem of the authorship of the minutes and canons of these two Councils. Because Martin is the only person living in the province at this time who is known ever to have written anything, it seems plausible to assign these words to him. The uniformity of the texts throughout both of the Councils and a comparison of the accentual cursus in them and in known works of Martin help to support the theory that he was responsible for the present form of the ecclesiastical texts, although it will probably never be possible to demonstrate this beyond a doubt.

Appended to the text of the Second Council is a collection of eighty-four canons translated by Martin from the Greek canons of the Eastern church. The preface definitely shows their authorship and dedicates them to one of the bishops present from the other province, Nitigisius of Lugo, and all the churches in his province. The exact sources for each canon may be found in the apparatus of my edition. The Eastern Councils from which material was drawn include Nicaea, Ancyra, Gangra, Neocesarea, Antioch, and Laodicea. Here, as in the *Sayings of the Egyptian Fathers*, it is often possible to study Martin's methods of translation by comparison with the original Greek. Several canons were also included from the

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<sup>11</sup> P. 83.

First Council of Toledo and there are a few for which no earlier source has been located.

The present volume does not include a translation of the Braga Councils or of Martin's canons, because they belong more properly to the larger study of the collections of the Spanish Councils and, in general, to all the material concerned with the Councils of the early Catholic Church, both local and general. It is regrettable that none of this exists in English, but many years of cooperative work would be required to establish reliable Greek and Latin texts before a satisfactory English translation could be made.

### *Anger*

At the Second Council of Braga, Martin had met Vittimer, the Bishop of Auria, who requested a treatise on the topic of "anger." This we may gather from Martin's opening words: "While we were recently together . . ." The work *On Anger* may perhaps thus be dated in the latter part of 572. Just as Martin had used Cassian as a source for his earlier discussions of vanity and pride, so here he used Seneca as a source on anger. Bickel<sup>12</sup> was the first to study in detail every sentence written by Martin and to prove that only the opening and closing sentences were his own. All the other words in the essay exist somewhere in the original of Seneca, but by no means in the same order. It has been demonstrated that many changes in phrasing and word order were caused by Martin's use of the accentual rather than the quantitative cursus. The apparatus which accompanies my Latin text contains a detailed analysis of the source of each phrase, which need not be repeated in the notes here. It is sufficient to say that, if Martin's borrowing of such extensive passages constitutes some-

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<sup>12</sup> Ernst Bickel, "Die Schrift des Martinus von Bracara formula vitae honestae," *Rheinisches Museum* 60 (1905) 505-551.

thing which we today would call plagiarism, it was still not a slavish borrowing throughout, for all of the thoughts have been rearranged. Topics of similar content have been assembled from each of Seneca's three books, showing that Martin was extremely well acquainted with the original.<sup>13</sup>

The edition of do Amaral has a Portuguese translation.<sup>14</sup> *Anger*, as written by Martin of Braga, has only this once been translated into any other language.

### *Reforming the Rustics*

Another of the bishops who attended the Second Council was Polemius from Astorga. Some time after he returned home, he sent Martin a letter asking the proper method of giving instructions to the rustics concerning their idolatries and other sins. Martin's reply was: "I would preach them a sermon as follows." We have thus a treatise in the form of a sermon contained within a letter.

In modern times, this sermon has aroused greater interest than any of Martin's other works because of its originality and the insight we gain through it to many popular superstitions in Spain of the sixth century. A detailed interpretation of each of these superstitions will be found in a book by Rev. Stephen McKenna.<sup>15</sup>

The form of the sermon follows closely the outline of Augustine's treatise, *De catechizandis rudibus*, in recommending use of an outline world history from creation to the present day, explaining the origin of demons, and giving instructions

<sup>13</sup> Notes which have appeared since 1950 include A. Fontán, "Anotaciones críticas al texto del Martinus Bracarenis Tractatus de Ira," *Emerita* 18 (1950) 377-380; and A. Kurfess, "Zu Martini episcopi Bracarenis libellus de Ira," *Athenaeum* 32 (1954) 250-258.

<sup>14</sup> Pp. 169-182.

<sup>15</sup> *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom* (Catholic University of America Studies in Mediaeval History, New Series 1; Washington 1938).

concerning the Last Judgment, eternal happiness for the good, and everlasting misery for the wicked. Other topics such as renunciation of the devil at the time of baptism and the true nature of the Greek gods were found by Martin in several of the sermons of Caesarius of Arles.

For these instructions to the rustics, Martin recommends use of speech which is itself rustic, and his own Latin is full of vulgarisms and deliberately incorrect Latin constructions, such as the ablative with verbs of motion and incorrect sequence of tenses. The Latin text of the sermon provides source material for study of the ways by which Latin gradually developed into the present languages of the Spanish peninsula.

Among the practices of pagan superstition against which Martin inveighs is that of naming the days of the week for the pagan gods. The effectiveness of his stand appears from the fact that Martin's counsel was heeded and that Portugal is the only Roman country which employs the use of numbers to designate the days.

A Portuguese translation was made by do Amaral;<sup>16</sup> it omits the present first chapter and stops before the end of chapter seventeen. A complete English translation, based on Caspari's edition, was made by Rev. Harold F. Palmer.<sup>17</sup>

### *Rules for an Honest Life*

This little essay on the four cardinal virtues is addressed to Miro, king of the Sueves, and must have been written after his accession in 570. Except for the introduction and conclusion, in a very rhetorical and difficult Latin, the work is a carefully arranged book with one chapter each devoted to prudence, magnanimity, continence, and justice and their

<sup>16</sup> Pp. 241-256.

<sup>17</sup> *Martin of Bracara, De Correctione Rusticorum: A Commentary, with an Introduction and Translation* (unpublished Master's dissertation, Catholic University of America; Washington 1932).



characteristics; then, a briefer treatment urging moderation in each of these virtues. The body of the work is non-Christian in basis, but comprising those Stoic elements with which Christianity was completely in harmony. Both Cicero and Seneca use the same four Latin words for the four essential virtues which had first been described by Plato, namely, *prudentia*, *magnanimitas* (or *fortitudo*), *continentia* (or *temperantia*), and *iustitia*. Martin's introduction clearly reminds us that he has propounded a moral code without reference to the Scriptures. Parallels in thought and language between these *Rules for an Honest Life* and the existing works of Seneca are numerous and have been collected by several scholars. The obvious conclusion is that the work was taken directly from an essay of Seneca which is now lost. We know of a Senecan *De officiis* and of an *Exhortationes*, both of which may have contained a discussion of the virtues. Martin probably adapted one of these in the very same way that he adapted Seneca's three books *On Anger*. By the standards of the sixth century, the term plagiarism cannot be used to describe such extensive use of material.

An accident in one of several manuscripts in the Middle Ages caused the little book to lose its Martinian preface, after which scribes and readers easily concluded that they were studying a genuine work of Seneca, to which they universally gave the name *On the Four Cardinal Virtues*. This had happened at least as early as the twelfth century. For the next 300 years, the work was often combined with the supposed *Correspondence of Seneca and St. Paul* to strengthen the belief in Seneca's personal adherence to Christianity. Well into the sixteenth century, it was used for moral instruction in public schools; not even the individual protests of such men as Erasmus succeeded in stemming this tradition. There are more than 650 manuscripts of this work in existence, about one-third of which were written in the fifteenth century. Numerous very early versions were made in Italian, French, German,

and other languages. There were English translations by the poets laureate Wynkyn de Worde in 1516, and Robert Whittington in 1546. The present translation appears to be the first in modern English.

### *Triple Immersion*

This, the shortest of Martin's treatises, cannot be dated exactly. It is written in answer to a letter from a Bishop Boniface, whose see is unknown, but probably outside of the Suevic kingdom and in some part of Visigothic Spain. Boniface had been informed that bishops in Martin's territory performed baptismal rites in the names, not in the single name, of the Trinity, that is, that they repeated the formula with each of the three immersions. This, Martin insists, is completely false, for the correct practice is to observe triple immersion with a single repetition of the formula. Several ancient sources are adduced to support this view.

It is revealed, however, that in some parts of Spain a single immersion was observed for the purpose of avoiding the taint of Arianism. But triple immersion is not one of the points in which the Arians are heretical, and Martin reminds Boniface that the Sabellians practice simple immersion.

Nothing further is known of the history of this problem in Martin's territory of Galicia, but the rest of Spain continued to go against other parts of the Christian world, for Pope Gregory sent a letter to Leander of Seville in 591 defending triple immersion, but conceding that for Spain the use of threefold immersion by heretics is sufficient reason for its being avoided by the faithful.

The text of do Amaral<sup>18</sup> is accompanied by a Portuguese translation. There is no other translation known to me in any

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<sup>18</sup> Pp. 232-238.

language.<sup>19</sup> It is to be hoped that the forthcoming edition of the works of St. Martin in Portugal will have turned up better manuscript evidence for the work *On Triple Immersion*, for nothing earlier than the sixteenth century has been discovered so far.

### *The Date of Easter*

St. Martin's short treatise on how to calculate the date of Easter is but a single episode in the long history of the paschal controversy, so well interpreted by Charles W. Jones.<sup>20</sup> One of the canons of the Second Council of Braga had decreed that during Advent the date of the next Easter must be announced to the people from the pulpit, so that they would know when Lent commences. Martin carefully explains how he reaches his conclusions that Easter may be observed no earlier than March 22, and no later than April 21, and that it must fall within the limits of the fourteenth and twenty-first days of the moon. It seems fairly plausible that the occasion of the treatise was the approach of Easter in 577, when, Gregory of Tours informs us, Gaul was to observe April 18, but a few Gallic bishops planned to join the Spaniards in celebrating March 21. This is, then, another important Church matter in which the Galicians did not agree with the Visigoths. Although this treatise had no later effect on the rest of Spain, it did pass directly into the larger collections of paschal computations and was transmitted from Spain to Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

19 There is a free Spanish version in A. C. Vega, *El "De institutione virginum" de San Leandro de Sevilla* (El Escorial 1948) 31-36.

20 *Bedae opera de temporibus* (Cambridge, Mass. 1943).

21 See now the important restrictions by the late P. David in *Bulletin des études portugaises* 14 (1950) 283-299. David would say that this Easter tract is by a Priscillianist and that it was added to the manuscript of the genuine works of Martin. His objections to Martinian authorship are important and have not been discussed since he wrote. At any rate, this particular Easter computation must have been made in Galicia in this period.

The Portuguese translation by do Amaral is found with his Latin text on pp. 220-227. No other version in any language is known to me.

*Poems and Other Works*

A completely separate manuscript tradition has preserved three poems by Martin of Braga. One is an inscription for a basilica, another for a refectory; these were perhaps written for the dedication of a church in honor of St. Martin of Tours at Dumium in 558. The third is an epitaph of six lines, which informs us that Martin of Braga was born in Pannonia, came to the West by sea, and followed in the steps of his patron, Martin of Tours. The longer poems contain material taken from the works of Dracontius and Sidonius Apollinaris. They are not included in the present translation.

Isidore says that Martin of Braga also wrote a volume of letters. Unless the works herein addressed to Polemius, Vitimer, and Boniface were these letters, the collection has been lost. Isidore also mentions a *Rule* composed by Martin for the benefit of Arians whom he had converted to Catholicism.

Finally, Martin has been given responsibility for the many distinctive features of the Mozarabic ritual and for the special ritual still observed in Braga. Of the latter, there is some probability, although part of the Braga ritual may have been formulated by Martin from earlier observances.

Two works in manuscripts, *De moribus* and *De paupertate*, containing extensive quotations from Seneca, were often printed as works of Martin of Braga, but no manuscript evidence of such authorship has ever been found.

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## SAYINGS OF THE EGYPTIAN FATHERS

*(Sententiae Patrum Aegyptiorum)*

*which Martin, Bishop of Dumium, translated from Greek  
into Latin<sup>1</sup>*

(1) Abbot John used to say to the brothers: "The fathers eating only bread and salt became strong in the work of God, while they constrained themselves. Let us also confine ourselves to this same bread and salt. For he who serves God must be constrained in these things, since the Lord Himself said: 'Narrow and close is the way that leads to life.'"<sup>2</sup>

(2) A brother asked the same old man: "The fasts and watches which we perform, what do they do?" The old man replied: "They cause the soul to become humble. For it is written: 'Behold my affliction and my suffering, and take away all my sins.'<sup>3</sup> For if the soul labors over these matters, God will have mercy and compassion upon it."

(3) Abbot Poemen said: "If you possess either thought of fornication or slander of your neighbor, do not speak while either of these is in your heart, and do not rest easy for one moment, for if you admit them to your heart, you will immediately feel their harmfulness. But rather drive them out, and you will have rest."

(4) A brother asked an old man: "What shall I do, father, against lustful thoughts?" He replied: "Pray God that the eyes of your soul may see the help which comes from God, which surrounds man and saves him."

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. 7.14.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ps. 24.18.

(5) A certain brother went to market and asked Abbot Poemen: "How shall I sell my handwork?" The old man said to him: "Do not desire to sell anything for more than it is worth; but rather, if you are mistreated, be a friend to him who bargains to obtain more than he should, and sell in peace. Although I have often gone to the market, I never wanted to make profit on my work or to be unfair to my brother, for I am confident that what is my brother's gain will bear fruit for me."

(6) A certain brother went to Abbot Agatho and said: "Father, permit me to live with you." As he received him, he saw nitre in his hand and said to him: "Where did you get the nitre?"<sup>4</sup> The brother answered: "I found it in the road as I was coming, and picked it up." The old man said to him: "Did you put it there?" He answered: "No." And the old man said to him: "If you did not put it there, how does it happen that when you came to live with me you picked up what you had not put there?" Soon he dismissed him, saying: "Go and carry it back to the place from which you took it, then live with me."

(7) A brother asked Abbot Sisoius: "An inheritance has been left to me by my parents; what shall I do with it?" The old man replied: "What can I say to you, brother? If I tell you, 'Give it to the church for the clerics,' they will feast upon it. If I say, 'Give it to your relatives,' you will have no reward. Accordingly, if you wish to take my advice, give it to the needy and you will be without anxiety."

(8) Abbot Moses said: "Separation from material things, that is, voluntary poverty, and endurance with patience, and understanding are the possessions of a monk. For it is written: 'Even if these three men were in it, Noe, Daniel, and Job, I live, says the Lord God, and they will be saved.'<sup>5</sup> Now Noe is the personification of voluntary poverty, Job the personifica-

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<sup>4</sup> The modern word is *natron*, from the soda lakes of Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ezech. 14.14, 16.

tion of endurance with patience, Daniel the personification of understanding. Accordingly, if the deeds of these three holy men are in any man, the Lord is with him, dwelling with him, receiving him, and driving away from him every temptation and every tribulation that comes from the enemy."

(9) Three brothers contracted for the harvesting of a field; they hired themselves out and began to harvest. Now one of them fell ill while he was reaping and returned to his cell. So the other two brothers said to one another: "Our brother has fallen ill; let us push ourselves a little harder and trust that by the aid of his prayers we may also reap his share." So after they had finished reaping and received the pay for their hire, a certain measure of wheat, then they summoned the brother and said: "Come, receive the pay for your hire." But he said: "What pay do I have, since I was unable to reap?" They answered: "By the aid of your prayers, we completed both your task and our own, therefore, take your pay." But he was unwilling to accept anything from them. After they had tried for some time to force him to accept and he still refused, they went off to a certain old man to have the matter settled. Now the brother who had fallen ill said: "My lord abbot, the three of us started to reap a field which we had hired, but after one day I fell ill and returned to my cell, and now they would force me to accept pay for work that I did not do." And the two brothers said in reply: "Hear our side, our lord and father; if all three of us had worked, we should perhaps have completed our work by very great labor. As it is, through the aid of our brother's prayer, God helped us, and we have completed the whole field, and he does not want to take his pay." Upon hearing this, the old man marveled greatly and called together his brothers and said: "Come, brothers, and hear today the 'just judgment.'"<sup>6</sup> And he disclosed to them what had been said by each party, and they all marveled at both sides; how one would not consent to receive

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 2.5.



his pay, while the others tried to use force to compel their brother to take his pay. Then, in the presence of all, he pronounced that the brother should receive his pay and distribute it in any way he wished. So the brother departed sad and weeping.

(10) The old man said: "If you dwell with your neighbor, be as a column of stone, which, if it is harmed, does not become angry; if it is praised, is not lifted up."

(11) Abbot Sisoïus said: "Once, when I went to market with a brother to sell baskets, I saw that anger was coming upon me; so I dropped my wares and ran away."

(12) Abbot John said: "Once, as I was going up a road in the desert in Scete and weaving palm braid, I heard a camel driver speaking idle words, and lest I become angry, I dropped my braid and ran away."

(13) While the same old man was engaged in reaping the harvest, he overheard a brother saying in anger to his neighbor: "You should talk." And he left the field and ran away.

(14) A brother asked Abbot Poemen: "What is the meaning of the Lord's words: 'Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friend'?" How shall this be done?" The old man answered: "If one hears an ill word from his neighbor and, although he could reply in kind, yet fights in his heart to purge himself of the stain of bitterness, and forces himself not to reply ill so as to sadden the other, such a man lays down his life for his friend."

(15) Abbot Macarius also said: "If we recall the evils that we suffer from men, we lose the virtue of the recollection of God; but if we recall the evils that are sent to us by demons, we shall be unperturbed."

(16) He also said: "It is charged as a fault against a monk if, when hurt or injured by his brother, he does not first purge his heart in love. For the Sunamitess would not have deserved to receive Eliseus into her house, except that she had no

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7 John 15.13.

quarrel with anyone.<sup>8</sup> Now the Sunamitess stands for the soul, and Eliseus represents the Holy Spirit; if the soul were not pure, it would not deserve to receive the Spirit of God."

(17) The brothers questioned Abbot Poemen on behalf of a certain brother who fasted perfectly six days in the week, yet was excessive in anger, and they asked why he experienced this. The old man answered: "He who has learned to fast six days, but not to control his anger, should have exhibited greater zeal over the small task."

(18) Abbot Poemen had a relative with him in his cell who was having a quarrel with another brother who resided outside the monastery, and Abbot Poemen said to him: "My dear brother, I do not want you to have a quarrel with anyone who is outside our monastery." But he paid no attention to him. So Poemen arose and went to another great old man and said to him: "My brother has a quarrel with someone outside of our monastery and we have no peace." The old man said to him: "Poemen, are you still alive? Go back to your cell and reflect in your heart that for a year you have been in your tomb."

(19) As Abbot Poemen was sitting in his cell, two brothers fell into a violent quarrel, but the old man spoke not a word to them. Now Abbot Panub came in and found them quarreling and said to Poemen: "Why did you leave the brothers alone? Why did you not tell them to cease quarreling?" Poemen said to him: "They are brothers; they will make up again." Panub said to him: "What is this? You see that they are quarreling almost to the point of shedding blood, and you say that they will make up again?" Poemen said to him: "Brother, just pretend in your heart that I am not here." And so Abbot Poemen was quiet and silent and charitable.

(20) Heretics once came to Abbot Poemen and began to criticize the archbishop of Alexandria, but the old man did not answer. Instead, he summoned his disciple and said: "Set a

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. 4 Kings 4.8-37.

table and give them something to eat, and so dismiss them in peace."

(21) A brother asked Abbot Poemen: "How is it one must sit in one's cell?" He replied: "To sit in one's cell is to work openly with one's hands and to mediate upon the word of God and to be silent and to eat by oneself only bread. The unseen ways to moral progress are to sit and control one's own thoughts, or wherever one goes to know and observe the canonical hours, not to neglect such hours in private, but to meditate, and, finally, always to observe good moral conversation and to refrain from evil talk."

(22) A certain brother asked an old man: "My heart is hard and does not fear God. What shall I do that I may fear God? He replied: "This is my opinion, that a man who always keeps self-reproach in his heart gains the fear of God." The brother said: "What is self-reproach?" The old man answered: "That a man reproaches his soul in all matters, saying to it that it must stand before God, and saying further: 'Why should I wish to show malice to any man?' I think that if a man abides by these things the fear of God comes into his soul."

(23) Abbot Macarius said: "If, for a monk, criticism is as praise, and poverty like riches, and hunger like a banquet, he never dies. It is impossible for one who believes in God and piously worships Him to fall into unclean passion and the error of demons."

(24) The old man said: "When you wake or when you walk or when you sit or when you do anything else, if God is before your eyes, the enemy will in no wise be able to frighten you. If this thought abides in a man, the strength of God also clings to him."

(25) A certain brother said to Abbot Peter: "When I am in my cell, my soul is at peace; but when I go outside, if I hear my brother saying something, I get upset." The old man replied: "Your key opens another's door." The brother

said to him: "What do these words mean?" The old man replied: "Your questions open the door for his words, so that you hear what you do not wish to hear." The brother said to him: "What, then, shall we do when a brother arrives? What are we to say to him?" The old man answered: "The learning of everyone is but suffering; where there is no suffering, it is impossible to be on one's guard."

(26) A brother asked Abbot Sisoïus: "After how long a time must a man cut off his passions?" He replied: "At whatever hour passion comes, cut it off."

(27) A brother addressed Abbot Agatho: "My passions do not leave me." The old man answered: "Their implements are within you. Give them surety that you have renounced them and they will flee from you."

(28) A certain brother went to an anchorite and, having been charitably received by him, said to him as he was leaving: "Forgive me, father, for having disturbed your usual mode of living." And he replied: "My mode of living, brother, is to receive peaceably anyone who comes and to dismiss him charitably when he leaves."

(29) A brother asked an old man: "How is it that God promises good to the soul in the Holy Scriptures, yet the soul does not wish to remain in the good, but inclines to what is transitory and unclean?" The old man answered: "Because it has not yet tasted the sweetness of heavenly things; therefore, it turns more quickly to what is unclean."

(30) A brother asked an old man: "How is it that the soul loves the passions?" He replied: "The soul loves the passions, but it is the Spirit of God which restrains it. Therefore, we should mourn and watch for what is unclean within us. As Mary bent over the tomb weeping, the Lord quickly appeared to her;<sup>9</sup> so, too, the soul, if it loves tears."

(31) A brother asked an old man: "Tell me, father, some word of salvation." He replied: "Go and ask God that He

<sup>9</sup> Cf. John 20.11-18.

grant you always to have in your heart grief and humility, and always watch out for your sins."

(32) They reported of Abbot Poemen that, when he was about to leave his cell to join the congregation in church, he would sit for almost an hour examining his thoughts within himself; then he would enter.

(33) A brother asked an old man: "What shall I do for my sins?" He replied: "He who desires to be free from his sins shall be freed from them by weeping, and he who wishes to build virtues in himself will build them by weeping. Even the Scriptures are composed of mourning, for our fathers said to their disciples: 'Wail.'<sup>10</sup> There is no other way to life except this."

(34) A brother asked an old man: "What shall I do, father?" He replied: "When Abraham entered the promised land, he first bought a tomb for himself, and near the tomb he made sure of land for a possession."<sup>11</sup> The brother said to him: "What is a tomb?" He answered: "A place of mourning and weeping."

(35) Abbot Moses said: "If a man's actions do not accord with his prayers, he labors in vain. When a man prays for himself, that his sins may be forgiven, he should be careful not to sin again. When one puts away the desire to sin and walks in the fear of God, God will soon receive him joyfully."

(36) A brother asked an old man: "What shall a man do in every temptation that comes upon him and in every thought sent by the enemy?" He replied: "He must weep in the sight of the goodness of God, that He may aid and succor him. For it is written: 'The Lord is with me to help me, and I shall avenge myself upon my foes.'<sup>12</sup>

(37) A brother asked an old man: "Behold, a man beats his servant for a fault which he has committed; what does the

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<sup>10</sup> Jer. 4.8 and elsewhere.

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Ps. 117.7.

servant then say to his master?" He replied: "If he is not a bad servant, he says to his master: 'I have sinned; have pity on me,' and nothing else. But when he recognizes his sins and confesses that he has sinned, his master will forgive him."

(38) A brother asked an old man: "If there is a persecution for the cause of the faith, where must one flee?" He replied: "Where you hear the faithful are orthodox, there flee."

(39) A brother asked Abbot Poemen: "What shall I do, because my thoughts disturb me as I sit in my cell?" He replied: "Despise no one, judge no one, speak evil of no one; and God will give you rest and will cause your sitting down to be undisturbed. For the properties of the soul are to watch one's speech, to guard one's actions, and exercise judgment. If one prostrates himself in the sight of God, and does not exalt himself to be measured with the great, and does not determine his own will, but sits in his cell and keeps his place, he will not be thrown into confusion, for these are the tools of the soul. Of all of these, guard especially against determining your own will; then you will have peace."

(40) A brother asked an old man: "What shall I do, for my thoughts molest me?" The old man replied: "Go and say to them: 'Tell me, what fault or complaint have I to find with you?' Then you will have peace. Reflect upon your desires and cast them behind you; then you will have no anxiety and your thoughts will flee from you."

(41) A brother asked an old man: "Why is it that sometimes when I recite the Psalms I am in more of a hurry to reach the end?" He replied: "How else can a man reveal that he loves God, except when he is attacked by a demon? It is then that we put violent restraint upon ourselves, because we are firmly held in the fear and love of God."

(42) He also said: "Flies do not approach a lamp which is lit, but they do light upon one that is only warm. So demons flee a monk who is lit by the fire of the Divine Spirit, but they attack him if he is lukewarm."

(43) He also said: "If your adversaries attack you, the first time, flee; the second time, flee; the third time, be as a sword against them, go out over them and cut them down."

(44) A certain brother came to Abbot Poemen during Lent and, while he was consulting him about his thoughts, said to the old man: "I hesitated about coming here at this time; I kept saying that perhaps you would be shut in during this season." The old man answered: "It is not the wooden door, but the door of the tongue that we have learned to close."

(45) The brothers once came from Scete to the monk John, who was sitting in silence and working. When he had greeted them, he turned away without saying more and began to work. And the brothers said: "John, who gave you a monk's habit? Why didn't he teach you to be hospitable to the brothers and to say 'Pray' or 'Sit'?" John said to them: "A man who is a sinner has no time for these things." Abbot Theodore said: "You speak the truth, for God does not require this commandment of a man who is in supplication and penance."

(46) A brother addressed Abbot Poemen: "Father, teach me what I shall do." He replied: "It is written: 'I will declare my iniquity; and I will think for my sin.'"<sup>13</sup>

(47) A brother asked an old man: "Father, what shall I do?" He replied: "Go and become fond of doing violence to yourself. Unsheathe your sword and go forth to war." The brother said to him: "My thoughts do not permit me." The old man answered: "It is written: 'Call upon me in time of your distress; and I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me.'<sup>14</sup> Call, therefore, upon God and he will free you."

(48) Abbot Theodore and Abbot Or were once putting mud on the roof of a cell, and one said to the other: "If God visits us right now, what are we going to do?" Then, wailing at one another, they left their work uncompleted and each retired to his cell.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ps. 37.19.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ps. 49.15.

(49) When Abbot Silvanus was sitting in his cell, he went into a trance and fell upon his face; after many hours he arose weeping. His disciple stood by him and said: "What is the matter, father?" But he remained silent and kept weeping. As the disciple continued to insist and, finally, used force to get an answer, the old man said: "I was carried to the judgment, my son, and saw many in monk's garb going to punishment and many of the laity entering the kingdom of God."

(50) Abbot Moses once went to a well to draw water, and he saw the brother Zachary praying, with the Spirit of God abiding over him in peace.

(51) It was said of Abbot John that he never permitted an idle thought to enter his heart nor spoke of the things of this world. So the brothers tested him, saying: "We thank God, father; it has rained a great deal and the palm trees have been irrigated and are sprouting and the brothers may find leaves for their work." The old man said to them: "Just so, brothers, is the Spirit of God. When it descends into the hearts of the saints, they are opened and bear fruit in the fear of God."

(52) A brother asked an old man: "What is the meaning of the Lord's words: 'I was in prison and you came to me?'"<sup>15</sup> He answered: "Although the Lord referred this to those who were His neighbors, yet, since sitting in a cell is to be in prison, if one sits in a cell and always keeps his thoughts upon God, to him it may rightly be said: 'I was in prison and you came to me.'"

(53) A brother asked Abbot Bessarion: "What shall I do, for my thoughts trouble me?" Abbot Bessarion replied: "Keep quiet, do not esteem yourself with the great, but be silent in your heart."

(54) A brother asked Abbot Antony: "What does it mean for a man to esteem himself of no value?" He replied: "To think oneself like the animals, which cannot reason, for they

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<sup>15</sup> Matt. 25.36.



have no judgment; as it is written: 'I was like a brute beast in your presence. Yet with you I shall always be.'"<sup>16</sup>

(55) Abbot Pambo asked Abbot Antony: "What shall I do while I sit in my cell?" He replied: "Be not confident of the reward of your justice, and do not think of transitory things, and be continent of tongue and appetite."

(56) A brother asked an old man: "Do you think it is good to have a good reputation in the sight of men?" He answered: "Such reputations confer no virtue. Do not desire to have a good reputation with your brother; rather, avoid it."

(57) A brother asked an old man: "What is humility?" He answered: "If one returns good to one who does him evil, that is perfect humility." The brother said: "What if one cannot be successful in doing this?" He replied: "He should run away and remain quiet."

(58) A brother asked an old man: "What is progress for a monk?" He answered: "Humility, for to the extent that a man lowers himself in humility, so much does he advance in heaven."

(59) A brother asked an old man: "How can the soul achieve humility?" He answered: "By always examining its own sins."

(60) Abbot Poemen said with a sigh: "All virtues have entered my cell except one virtue, and upon it man depends." The brothers asked him: "What is this virtue, father?" The old man answered: "That a man shall always reproach himself."

(61) A brother addressed an old man: "Come into my cell if I deserve to wash your feet." But he did not go. Again, the second and the third time he spoke to him, but he did not go. Finally, the brother went into the cell of the old man and, showing repentance in his presence, asked him to come into his cell. And the old man arose and went with him, and he said

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<sup>16</sup> Ps. 72.22, 23.

to the old man: "Why did you not come, though I asked you often before?" The old man answered: "You spoke with words alone; you did not satisfy my heart that I should come; but when I saw the true humility of a monk within you, then I rejoiced and came to you."

(62) An old man said: "How can a man teach his neighbor what he has not learned and has not himself observed? Be ever humble, therefore, to learn."

(63) An old man said: "The virtue of a monk is to criticize himself on every occasion."

(64) An old man said: "A man cannot see his thoughts from without, but only when they are within; then, if he is a fighter, he drives them out."

(65) An old man said: "It is the task of a monk to observe his thoughts from a distance."

(66) An old man said: "A situation which is not foreseen does not permit us to proceed to better things."

(67) An old man said: "Do not measure yourself, but cling to one whose mode of life is upright."

(68) An old man said: "Every connection from which a man does not sever himself will again involve him."

(69) An old man said: "The victory over any trouble that comes upon a man is silence."

(70) An old man said: "Every carnal delight is an abomination before God."

(71) An old man said: "If a thought of some carnal necessity comes to you and touches you once, twice, even three times, pay no attention."

(72) An old man said: "If a man does not say in his heart: 'God and I are alone in this world,' he has no peace."

(73) An old man said: "Silence is a journey."

(74) An old man said: "If a man diminishes the demands of men and of his appetite, he has peace."

(75) An old man said: "A monk must have a heart brave for each single thing; then he will be saved."

(76) An old man said: "If you see or hear something, do not report it to your brother, for this engenders a quarrel."

(77) An old man said: "One's own will and idleness and getting accustomed to these two things are the downfall of a man."

(78) An old man said: "Tranquillity and silence and secret meditation give rise to saintliness."

(79) An old man said: "Everything that is beyond the mean is the work of demons."

(80) An old man said: "What is the good of building someone else's house and overthrowing one's own?"

(81) An old man said: "Each man's own will is like a wall of bronze<sup>17</sup> or a rock placed before him separating a man from God. Therefore, if a man conquers his own will, he can most truthfully say: 'And by the help of God I shall leap over a wall.'"<sup>18</sup>

(82) An old man said: "We leave the straight and well-lighted road and travel that which is thorny and dark; that is to say, we leave off weeping for ourselves and our sins and always regard the wrongs of our neighbors."

(83) An old man said: "One who criticizes another is not a monk; one who returns evil for evil is not a monk; one who is greedy or proud or talkative is not a monk; but the one who is really a monk is humble and silent and full of charity, possessing the fear of God always in his heart."

(84) An old man said: "Do not despise the brother who stands beside you, for you do not know whether the Spirit of God is in you or in him."

(85) An old man said: "Humility and the fear of God are superior to all the virtues."

(86) An old man said: "If a monk wishes to quarrel with one who has done him wrong, his situation is the same as if he quarrels with the devil."

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<sup>17</sup> Reading *aeneus* for *aereus*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Ps. 17.30.

(87) An old man said: "From the least action to the greatest that a man performs, whether in thoughts or in deeds, it is entirely up to him to make the choice."

(88) An old man said: "Humility is not a banquet, but it is the seasoning salt of every banquet."

(89) An old man said: "To humiliate oneself and to hold oneself in contempt are like a wall for a monk."

(90) An old man said: "He who wishes to build a house must assemble many necessary things before he can complete the task. So a monk must make many careful preparations to be able to fulfill the works of God."

(91) An old man said: "There is no greater virtue than not to hold another in scorn."

(92) An old man said: "Blessed is he who endures toil and is thankful for it."

(93) An old man said: "For each one to force himself in every way, this is the road to God and the task of a monk."

(94) An old man said: "He who always forces himself for God's sake is like a man who is a confessor."

(95) An old man said: "A man who has death before his eyes at every hour conquers meanness of spirit."

(96) An old man said: "Be free in speaking, not a slave."

(97) An old man said: "It is impossible for a man who does not guard his mouth to succeed even in a single virtue, for the first virtue is to guard one's mouth."

(98) An old man said: "I fear three things, that is, when my soul is going to depart from my body, and when I am going to come into the presence of God, and when the sentence is going to be pronounced against me."

(99) An old man said: "In whatever place you sit, do not have regard for those who have their own consolation, but for the needy one who has neither bread nor peace."

(100) An old man said: "If you have passion, but let it alone and pray God for some other matter, you will not be heard. But first ask in behalf of your fight against passion, then,

when you have knocked and entered, place before God some other request."

(101) An old man said: "These three things are of utmost importance—fear of God and continual prayer and doing good to one's neighbor."

(102) An old man said: "Just as the breath that escapes from the nostrils, without which one cannot live, so a man must always have within him fear of God and humility."

(103) An old man said: "What is the use of commencing a task, if one does not learn to finish it? What is begun and not finished is nothing."

(104) An old man said: "If a man does not please you in your heart, do not share with him the knowledge of your heart."

(105) An old man said: "Be determined that you will never do wrong to any man, but that you will have your heart pure for every man."

(106) A brother asked an old man: "If I see some sin among the brothers, do you bid me make it known?" He answered: "If they are elders or of your own age, warn them humbly without criticism, so that even in this you may be found humble."

(107) A brother asked an old man: "Other brothers live with me and they want me to instruct them; how do you suggest that I act?" He replied: "First, do what you preach, that you may offer them not only advice, but a model."

(108) They used to say of Abbot Macarius the elder that, just as God covers the whole earth and bears the sins of men, so he was like a God on earth among the brothers, concealing their sins as if not seeing or hearing what he did see or hear.

(109) Abbot Moses asked Abbot Silvanus: "Can a man make a new start from day to day?" He replied: "If he is a workman, he can take up and start from day to day. It is necessary for each to learn some little thing from all of the virtues. Each day, as you rise in the morning, begin in every

virtuous deed and in every command of God, in great patience, in long-suffering, with fear and love of God, with humility of soul and body, in great endurance, in tribulation and recollection of the cell, in prayer and supplication, with purity of heart and eyes, with control over tongue and speech, in renunciation of material things and the desires of the flesh, in the struggle of the cross, that is, in trial and poverty of spirit, in spiritual continence and strife of battle, in penitence and grief, in simplicity of soul and silence, in fasting and nightly vigils, in manual labor according to the teachings of the Apostle Paul: 'Working with our own hands';<sup>19</sup> 'in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labors and trials, in necessities and hardships and persecutions';<sup>20</sup> 'in holes and caves and caverns of the earth.'<sup>21</sup> 'Be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only';<sup>22</sup> working your talent into two,<sup>23</sup> wearing a wedding garment,<sup>24</sup> founded upon a strong rock and not upon sand.<sup>25</sup>

"Alms and faith must not leave you. Reflect every day that death is near and, as though you were already enclosed in the tomb, have no care for this world. Let abstinence from food, humility, and grief not depart from you, and the fear of the Lord abide in you at every hour. For it is written: 'For fear of you, O Lord, we conceived and writhed in pain, giving birth to the spirit of salvation.'<sup>26</sup> Persevere in these things, then, and in any other virtue that there be, and do not measure yourself with the great, but believe yourself inferior to every creature, that is, viler than every man, however great a sinner he may be. Have discernment, criticize yourself, but do not judge your neighbor nor look down upon the sins of

19 1 Cor. 4.12.

20 Cf. 2 Cor. 11.27.

21 Cf. Heb. 11.38.

22 Cf. James 1.22.

23 Cf. Matt. 25.14-30.

24 Cf. Matt. 22.11-14.

25 Cf. Matt. 7.24, 25.

26 Cf. Isa. 26.18.

other people, nor bewail your own sins, nor be anxious for the deeds of any man. Be of gentle spirit, not inclined to anger. Think no evil in your heart against anyone, have no enmity in your heart nor hatred against one who fights with you without cause; do not become angry at his enmity, nor despise him in his need and trial, nor return evil for evil, but be peaceful with all: for this is the peace of God. Do not entrust yourself to one who does wrong, nor rejoice with him who does evil to his neighbor. Do not criticize another, for God knows everything and sees every man. Do not believe one who slanders, nor rejoice with him in his evil speech. Do not hate anyone because of his sin, for it is written: 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged.'<sup>27</sup> Do not despise a sinner, but pray for him, that God may give him conversion to penitence and have pity upon him: for God is powerful. And if you hear of anyone that he is acting unjustly, reply in these words: 'Am I a judge of these things? I am but a man and a sinner, dead beneath my sins and mourning for my own woes: for a dead man has no reason to be concerned for anyone.' Accordingly, he who thinks and performs these things is a worker of every kind of justice in the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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<sup>27</sup> Matt. 7.1.

## DRIVING AWAY VANITY<sup>1</sup>

(*Pro repellenda iactantia*)

### Chapter 1

There are many kinds of vices by which human frailty is attacked and by whose wounds almost all men are hurt. Just as these vices, moreover, are committed by everyone, so are they recognized by everyone. To mention only a few of many, there is one man who is overcome by wrath and is a servant to murder, homicide, uprising, and sedition. Another man is driven on by greed, and practices cruelty, avarice, false testimonies, violence, perjury, theft, lying, and cheating.<sup>2</sup> Another man is debased with lust and succumbs to obscene language, mockery, scurrilous talk, adulteries, and fornication. Another man is conquered by the gluttony of his throat and belly and becomes a slave to eating, drinking to excess, and drunkenness.<sup>3</sup> Not to go into numerous details, which it would take too long to mention, although it is clear that various individuals are attacked by one or another of these vices, there is one disease among all of them which makes men subject to its terms, not individually or only a few men, but all men together, and while other vices claim as their own each separate man whom they overcome, this one vice is not content until it is master over all. This is the vain desire for praise, which the Greeks call *cenodoxia* and the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 7-9 for this and the two following works.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. 15.19.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Coll.* 5.16.5 (CSEL 13.142-143).



Latins *vana gloria* or *iactantia*.<sup>4</sup> I shall describe the nature of this evil and how it wounds all human beings.

## Chapter 2

While in all the pursuits of this life some things please the human race more, some less, there is nothing sought by any man with more eagerness than human praise. Other things may be acquired with the most ardent ambition and greed, but after they have been possessed, no matter how great they are, they gradually become distasteful as a result of daily use. But the more this meaningless desire of vainglory is satisfied, the more it is sought, so that there is none of all his works which a man desires more than to be praised, nor is there a single thing that he would consider it more agreeable to receive than someone's admiration for him as a man of renown. This is what kings are eager for; this judges, city people and country people, men and women, boys, adolescents, young men and old, all seek after this. They all want to be praised, however falsely they are praised. Thus boys claim for themselves the skill of adolescents. Adolescents falsely pretend that they are as strong as young men. Young men desire to be credited with the wisdom of old men. Old men, because they can go no further, turn back and demand the fame of their past deeds. Women, although prevented by their sex, boast of men's strength and abilities. Country people want to appear like city people. Judges want to be granted the same prerogatives that kings have. Kings dream that they are as powerful as God. And so while each of them wants to seem greater than he really is, he seizes in enemy fashion and claims as booty the glory of the praise which is truly due to God alone. Hence

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 11.1 (CSEL 17.195). "Vainglory" is a reasonable rendering of the Greek word here quoted and of the first Latin one; the second Latin word, used also in Martin's title, carries the connotation of "boastfulness."

arises that sacrilege of the blasphemous, which is the most wicked deed possible, that since man seizes everything pertaining to praise, all that is left to offer to God is blame. The human race has exceeded its limit when you cannot find a man who does not want to be as admired as God. What limit can there be, then, to such as have mortgaged the very heaven to whose heights only the humble may attain?

### *Chapter 3*

For those who have usurped the things above, all that is left, so it seems to me, is the things below. They have no higher place to which to ascend, for the result of their constant ascending is that all they have left is to descend. All rush towards glory, though not by the same road. Some want to be praised for the honors they have received, others for those they have refused. Certain men boast of fine clothes, others of the cheapest rags. One man wants to find favor because he lives sumptuously, another for living frugally; finally, one man for vices, one for virtues. Everyone everywhere strives to spread his own fame, and therefore the cure for such vanity is most difficult, because it mingles not only with vices, but also with virtues. It does not allow a man to be recognized by himself for what he is, for when he rejoices in other people's praises, his joy is followed by exalted triumph, and his triumph, in turn, by pretentiousness and overestimation of himself. He judges that there is more in himself than he sees. Thus it happens that we are made miserable, not only by others' flattery but by our own also; for as long as a man does not admit the truth about himself, he makes his fame hang on the opinion of another, and when he is called fortunate, magnificent, powerful, he believes it of himself, not because it is so, but because it is said to be so. This is that deadly vice of which the Lord in the Gospel spoke thus to the Jews: "How

can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory which is from the only God?"<sup>1</sup> The Lord showed that whoever seeks glory from men does not have glory to expect from God. This is why He also made the remark about the hypocrites when they give alms: "They do it that they may be honored by men. Amen I say to you, they have had their reward,"<sup>2</sup> that is, the praise of men for the present only. Paul the Apostle also warns us: "Let us not become desirous of vainglory,"<sup>3</sup> meaning that vainglory which a liar increases by his lying, calling vain and idle that which nullifies the fruit of all labors, when man ascribes to himself any good that is performed.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Chapter 4*

Such a man not only cuts himself off from the rewards of his virtues, but even lays himself open to being condemned to eternal punishment, because the good action, which ought to be performed in consideration of a merciful God, has been performed in order to gain praise.<sup>1</sup> Take away the favors, take away men's admiration, and you will find few who do something good either for the love of God, or barring that, for fear of God; yet no less is the blame with which we are tainted, because we place men before God and human glory before heavenly glory. This disease of pride is acute; it poisons from either side and it wounds when least expected.<sup>2</sup> For some boast of themselves because they are good, others because they are bad. Of the good who boast it is said: "For God has scattered the bones of those who are pleased with them-

<sup>1</sup> John 5.44 in Cassian, *Inst.* 11.12 (CSEL 17.200).

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 6.2.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 5.26.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 11.19.1 (CSEL 17.203-204).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 11.19.2 (CSEL 17.204).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 11.10.3 (CSEL 17.199).

selves.”<sup>3</sup> Of the evil who boast it is said: “For the wicked man is praised in the desires of his soul, and the worker of injustice shall be blessed.”<sup>4</sup> There are also the words of the Apostle: “Their god is the belly, their glory is for their shame.”<sup>5</sup>

### *Chapter 5*

Accordingly, this vice of vanity creeps in and exercises its authority in both directions; but if those who live in good deeds, yet claim glory among men, are condemned by divine authority,<sup>1</sup> because they have desired themselves to be praised in these matters more than God, what will become of those who wish to be praised even though they live wickedly? Just let them reflect. There is, then, no end to vainglory; it not only follows what has been done, but even precedes what should be done. For if some good task has been planned by a man to be performed by him, he straightway begins to talk about it and is already showing others how marvelous he is going to be as a result. If he is attempting to teach certain people a right course, even before he is called learned or most eloquent by others, his ears are very eager to hear these titles from delight in the aforementioned veneration. If he has dictated a letter to a friend that is more charming than usual, before the letter is sent or reaches the hands of the one to whom it was addressed, he begins to calculate in advance, with clever thoughts of his own commendation, how very admirable he is going to seem in his friend's eyes and how great a consideration of his worth is going to be aroused by certain passages of his composition. If a benefit is conferred promptly upon someone in time of need, even before the asker has re-

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ps. 52.6 in Cassian, *Inst.* 11.12 (CSEL 17.200).

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 9B.3.

<sup>5</sup> Philemon 3.19.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Coll.* 21.14.5 (CSEL 13.589).

ceived it, the giver is already measuring how kind and generous everyone will consider him as a result. Finally, the soldier who takes up arms and goes to battle, even while it is uncertain on which side victory will fall, assumes the arrogance supplied by his courage and advances as proudly as if he were already a victor.

### *Chapter 6*

Thus, in some things, pride goes before and like a general urges and encourages all men to all things. Not only to the great does it give spirit, but also to the small. For in any attempted work or task, if you praise a man however weak, he will soon be stronger. If you pretend to admire a man carrying a small load, he will soon pick up a larger one. If you tell a lazy man that he is swift, he will straightway fly. In short, vainglory increases a man's impetus, even though it cannot give him more strength. Thus pride precedes some things, follows some things, so that unless a man is carefully on the watch for it in everything he does, there is no advantage to God from all his works, none to his neighbor, none even to himself, but like the wretched slave of a greedy mistress, no matter how hard he labors, he is still always naked.

### *Chapter 7*

But someone says to me: "Will nothing that we have done, then, be credited to charity, nothing to mercy, nothing to goodness?" I shall boldly answer: "Nothing, for everything that is accomplished under the command of vainglory instead of for the sake of goodness is credited to vainglory's own idle vanity." There are many things that might be said of this contagious affliction, but since its manifold subtleties may

already be clear to the wise man from these few descriptions, I shall pass on now to the remaining points and explain what worse vice is produced from this one.



## PRIDE

(*De superbia*)

### *Chapter 1*

How great a prophet and king David was when chosen among the people of God, and with what great endowment of mercy and generosity he was blessed, I believe that you, my dearest friend, have become acquainted through the testimony of the sacred writings. Let your wisdom, then, reflect how this beloved man of God feared that he might be overtaken by the wicked spirit of vainglory. For as he beheld the quality and the quantity of the good grace of God daily bestowed upon him—so many victories over foreign nations, such great affluence of wealth, punishment of his rivals, flourishing numbers of citizens, clemency in judgments, and, lastly, prophecy of the Holy Spirit in the knowledge of all things to come—fearing lest in the midst of such prosperity he might become inflated with the vanity of vainglory, he prayed God earnestly, saying: “Let not the foot of pride overtake me, nor the hand of the wicked disquiet me. See how all the evildoers have fallen: they are cast forth, and cannot rise.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Chapter 2*

Let us see, then, what is the meaning of the words: “Let not the foot of pride overtake me.” The foot in man, so far

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. 35.12, 13 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.6.2 (CSEL 17.210).



as reason shows, although it is the extremity of the body, is also like a foundation or the beginning of the rising state, and from it the fleshly body rises harmoniously to its full height, like a building. Therefore, when he says: "Let not the foot of pride overtake me," it is as if he were to say: "Let not the beginning of pride come to me," that is, vainglory, upon which foundation is built that disastrous lofty height of pride. For the one is born from the other and their proximity can be discerned and detected by only a very few. At whatever point men have glorified themselves exceedingly, there straightway pride is generated, so that they attribute the good, not to a dispensing God, but to their own power.

### *Chapter 3*

To delight in human praise is vainglory, but to credit to oneself rather than to God the good for which one is praised—that is pride. Vainglory is nourished by the esteem of others; pride, in turn, by vainglory. Once a man agrees with the opinions of others as to his greatness, he must also admit it to himself. This wretched state is followed by one even worse, in which no arguments will ever be able to drag away from him anything that he has corroborated even by his own testimony, however false it is. As a result, he becomes incorrigible, he scorns everyone else, admires only himself and that constantly, judging that only that is perfect and blameless which his own knowledge has produced. Therefore it was this that King David prayed might not overcome him, lest by chance he be induced by some hope of vain praise to ascribe to his own power rather than to the divine grace the fact that he was great.

*Chapter 4*

What next befalls men who are inflated with the spirit of pride the same prophet added in his next words, for after he had said: "Let not the foot of pride overtake me," he straightway added: "nor the hand of the wicked disquiet me," for he knew that a succession of sins always follows every example of pride, and this is so. Whoever is distended with the swelling of pride, and so imitates the glory of God that no one is like him, is like one truly profane who rises up to do injury to God. He is turned over by God to the hands of sinners, that is, to the works of unclean deeds, that he who is bowed down by the disgraceful acts that arise in his passions may learn that he is dust and ashes and may humbly recognize what he could not see when he was inflated within himself. Whence Solomon said: "Everyone who exalts his heart is unclean before the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

*Chapter 5*

Now let us consider the words with which King David continued: "See," he said, "how the evildoers have fallen: they are cast forth, and cannot rise." He evidently means that the beginning of downfall of all just men is in pride. The same is also written elsewhere: "Pride is the beginning of sin."<sup>1</sup> To show this more clearly, let us recall the fall of the first angel, who, for his glory and splendor, has been named Lucifer. He fell from that sublime and blessed region of the angels down to hell for no other fault than this one of pride, because, being supreme among all the other powers of heaven for the splendence of his even greater beauty, he came to believe that he obtained this, not through the kindness of his Creator, but

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Prov. 16.5 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.6.2 (CSEL 17.210).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eccclus. (Sir.) 10.6-18.

through his own virtue; as though he, like God, needed no further aid from any source, he judged himself similar to God, saying: "I will take my seat in the recesses of the North and I will be like the Most High."<sup>2</sup> It was this thought alone that cast him down, for he was soon deserted by God, whose protection he believed he did not need; suddenly, he became weak and wretched, he understood the inconstancy of his nature which he had not realized, and lost the gift of God which he possessed.<sup>3</sup> After this, he noticed that man, created from dust by God, was being substituted in the place of blessedness which he had himself lost; he was spurred on by envy and attacked man with the same weapon of pride by which he had been cast down. He had said to himself: "I will be like the Most High";<sup>4</sup> he said to Adam and Eve: "You shall be as gods."<sup>5</sup> This they coveted, and for no other reason than that they might become gods they transgressed the commandment of God. O how great blindness there is in that hunger for vainglory! Man does not see the obvious fallacy in which the likeness of God is promised to him perversely, not for his obedience, but for his contempt.

### Chapter 6

This is the enticing peril of that first poison, which is made savory with the bitter honey of vain boasting and which deceived both the angel and man. In this both heavenly and terrestrial creature fell. For this they were cast out of their abodes; the one from heaven, the other from paradise, and they could not stand because they had fallen mightily. The nature of the evil of pride which King David feared so

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 14.13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 12.4.1, 2 (CSEL 17.208); also Martin of Braga, *On Reforming the Rustics* 3-5.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. 14.14.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 3.5 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.4.3 (CSEL 17.208-209).

openly he himself demonstrated when the opportunities for downfall were supplied.

### *Chapter 7*

All kinds of sins, like wantonness, avarice, adultery, and others, do cause God to be angry, but He carries out the punishments for such either through the angels or through men. Pride, however, is serious enough to have no one else but God Himself as an opponent. For thus it is written: "But He Himself resists the proud."<sup>1</sup> The other vices are either directed back against the very ones who perpetrated them or appear to be committed against other men. Only the swelling of pride struggles directly against God;<sup>2</sup> that is why He takes it as an enemy, because, when it rises aloft, it always seeks to claim for itself what belongs to Him alone.

### *Chapter 8*

Although, in general, this inflation of pride attacks many people, there are none who have to fear it more than those who have reached the perfection of virtues in the spirit or copious riches and the highest offices in the flesh. It becomes all the greater in their cases, because the one who shows pride is greater. It is not content to destroy lowly and common people, but it is also present in the wiles of the greatest; the higher their rank, the deeper their fall. Hence, Scripture also has this to say about the same spirit of pride: "And his repast," it says, "is sumptuous."<sup>1</sup> It attacks men who are select and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. James 4.6; 1 Peter 5.5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 12.7 (CSEL 17.210).

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<sup>1</sup> Hab. 1.16 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.6.1 (CSEL 17.209).

lofty. It suggests to them that they are great; that they need nothing; that whatever they do, think, or say is all due to their wisdom and their prudence. If something turns out well for them under God's direction, they straightway claim that it was due to their own strength and their own industry, and they shout: "I did this"; "I said it"; "I thought it"; and as if everyone were stunned, they seize the glory of God and offer themselves to be admired in His likeness. By a righteous sentence, God withdraws his protection from them, as the Apostle says: "He has given them up to a reprobate sense, so that they do not do or think what is fitting,"<sup>2</sup> because, when they recognize the providence of God in all matters, they do not magnify God or offer thanks, but they boast of themselves and turn aside in their own idle thoughts. Though they claim to be wise, they are foolish; though they boast that they are firm, unconquered, powerful, they are weak, conquered, and powerless.

### *Chapter 9*

This being the case, it is absolutely clear that we must employ all our vigilance and all the industry of our hearts to avoid the desire for vainglory lest, when once that poisonous, contagious disease has crept into the interior of our hearts, it be allowed to grow upon the subtle delight in human praise when all our works are prosperous, and lest it produce from the abundance of its own iniquity a worse and more cruel offspring, which is pride. These two sins fill the innermost parts of the human mind when it is grounded in pernicious roots, then change the aspect of their wiles and fall upon the unsuspecting. Though they may have attained spiritual pursuits, vainglory soon entices them away from fasting, from watches, from reading, from desert solitude, from endurance,

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<sup>2</sup> Rom. 1.28.

from silence. If this first attack is not caught by the eye of an ever-watchful mind, then pride follows in its track, a dire companion that lies to them and makes them believe that they are holier and better than everyone else, that they stand at the highest peak of perfection, thanks to the strong foundations of their own virtue, and that they will never fall.

### *Chapter 10*

Finally, when once vainglory and pride together have made their domiciles within men's minds (especially those men who are subject to the delights of the carnal passions [. . .]<sup>1</sup>), then from each are produced the fertile seeds of many vices. For vainglory generates out of itself presumptions of many kinds, revelations of false dogmas, insincere statements, strife, heresies, sects, schisms, while pride begets indignation, wrath, contempt, slander, complaint, and, baser than all of these, blasphemy;<sup>2</sup> if anyone truly desires to delete the causes of all these ills, he must first cut himself off from their sources and roots. For the products of all the vices can be completely destroyed, if only their seeds are dug out before they germinate.

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<sup>1</sup> The text is imperfect at this point.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Coll.* 5.16.5 (CSEL 13.142-143).



## EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY

*(Exhortatio humilitatis)*

### *Chapter 1*

Whoever you are that excel in dignity of some office through the will of God and rank above other men in the useful service of provident governance, I ask you to accept worthily this little exhortation of mine without looking in it for the pompous foaming utterances of rhetoricians, since the virtue of humility is sought in purity of mind rather than in high-sounding words. If I happen to appear to say anything harsh, this is the fault of truth rather than my own. That is why some things are hard and others are easy, but, even though all men owe themselves something of both, I shall still speak the truth freely: there is no one who should more reasonably be told the truth than one who is in charge of many people. Even though the truth, as usual, may present him something harsh, like an antidote, however strong it is, however bitter it tastes, he must drink it because it is healthful.

### *Chapter 2*

Therefore, I urge most of all that you beware of those excessive seductions of men, which are always so delightful. In no other matter must you apply so much industry and care as in repelling those words which weaken the firmness of the mind by false enticements, which dig out approaches to win



favor for themselves by subtle assent rather than by the deserts of their own labors. You must, therefore, employ words that are useful rather than affable and pleasure-giving. To enjoy flattery is a royal vice; to offer flattery is servile. But although enjoyment of flattery is peculiar to kings, the common vice of ordinary people—a vice that is peculiar to them—is to fawn upon the words of rulers and to form their own words in accordance with their rulers' thoughts. If they happen to praise something and discover that their words are not favorably received, they straightway renounce what they had just praised. If they have found fault with a thing, they will turn around and praise it when that course pleases their patron. So the mind of the flatterer is carried back and forth, just as a ship is tossed by the blasts of changing winds, because it has no way to get out. Living on others' desires exists to the greatest degree among those whose wants are most numerous. Constrain your mind with the greatest degree of discretion in order that, when the crowd flatters and fills you on all sides with only pleasant words, proffering glorious sentiments in which they say to you what they would say to God, you may realize that of all this not a thing properly belongs to you except that which will remain with you even after you have departed from this life.

### *Chapter 3*

Therefore in all matters where great flattery has even exceeded the limits proper to man, you must recall that well-known lesson of David, in which he shunned the poison of flatterers with these words: "The just man shall correct me in kindness and shall reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head."<sup>1</sup> The "oil of the sinner" is flattery, which uses a smooth, suave unction to brighten up, as though

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. 140.5.

with cosmetics, the head of the inner man, that is, the heart. Therefore, the prophet David said that it was better for him to be corrected or advised by a just man than to be praised by any flatterer. It was right that he should denote the flatterer with the name of "sinner," since his is the greatest and most detestable crime in the sight of God—to hold one thing in his heart, to speak another with his lips. Of such he also says in another Psalm: "His words are smoother than oil, but they are drawn swords."<sup>2</sup> Of the just man he says: "He speaks the truth in his heart, and works not deceit with his tongue."<sup>3</sup> Although in these ways any subtle remarks of men, even without the pleasing sensations of praise, may draw your credulous mind to agreement, turn rather to the deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and you will find that the "lord of lords"<sup>4</sup> left us a great example of sacred humility amid the praises of men. Practice humility, then, take it for your mistress, set it as your guide when flatterers entice. Humility will tell you just how much of the things that men ascribe to you in praise is really yours and how long it will last. Humility does not let you be attentive to lies.

#### *Chapter 4*

In short, this holy humility will remove from you all the blandishments of flatterers and will reveal heaven to you when it whispers in your ear: "For dust you are."<sup>1</sup> It will place you in the true society of the heirs of God when it warns you on every occasion: "You are a man and a sinner." And when you look upon all your possessions and add them up in humility—it is a strange thing I shall say—you will find that

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 54.22 in Cassian, *Coll.* 16.18.5 (CSEL 13.454).

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 142, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Apoc. 19.16.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 3.19.

all men by adding to your pile but diminish it, that humility alone by diminishing adds. "The greater you are," so Solomon said, "humble yourself that much more,"<sup>2</sup> for though you govern many, you have not perfection if—and this is most important—you alone resist him whom you cannot govern. You will truly be in charge of others when you are first in charge of yourself. I am not now saying this to wicked men, but most especially to the good. For if you consider God's teaching, His precepts are given not only for sinners but also for the holy. The word of truth is spoken to them also, not to make them good, which they are, but to prevent them from becoming wicked, which they are not. In fact, I believe the good are more pleased with what is pure and what is free from blame. For our God is placated not so much by the pleasant prayers of those who praise Him as by innocence and simplicity; He inclines His ear more to those who offer Him a mind pure and free from guilt than to those who bring Him the sweet blandishments of their prayers. When I speak of vainglory or pride, there is none to whom I could more suitably address my words than to you who are in charge of many; for, even though you do not pay attention, they all heap compliments upon you, they all flatter, they all extol; and there is not one who offers something which is pleasant and, at the same time, far removed from danger. I am not surprised that they are all eager to do thus, for just as there is not much work in praising a ruler, so is there not much cause for fear.

### *Chapter 5*

I had to offer you these methods of obtaining humility and even to add something on how to moderate your regimen, even though it may be unnecessary, since you may possess it already: for the wind of vanity is always stronger when the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ecclus. (Sir.) 3.18.

position of honor is stronger. Accordingly, I desire you to walk always with a humble heart in the sight of God, "to whom the depths of human consciousness are fully revealed,"<sup>1</sup> for it is written: "Upon whom does my Spirit rest," saith the Lord, "but on the lowly man who trembles at my words?"<sup>2</sup> I desire you to observe all the commands of Christ, and when you fulfill them with your good works, to recall what the Lord said to the apostles. For He said to them: "When you have done everything that was commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what it was our duty to do,'"<sup>3</sup> that is, not by gift as though free, but by debt as though slaves. For no man, no matter how perfect in all things, has been successful in doing in advance the things that are pleasing to God in such a way as to lend to God at interest and to become His creditor, not His debtor. For who has anything that was not given by Him? or: "Who," as the Apostle said, "has first given to him, that recompense should be made to him? For from him and through him and with him are all things. To him be the glory forever, amen."<sup>4</sup>

### Chapter 6

Behold, this is the true and the Christian humility. In this you will best govern both yourself and those in your charge. In this you will be able to achieve victory over every vice, by attributing to God rather than to yourself the fact that you have won. The reason why our vices recover their strength at the very moment when they have almost been subdued is, in my opinion, only because we do not say to God what His warrior David said when fighting the wars of the Lord: "Through you," he said, "we have struck down our foes; and

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* 10.2.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa. 66.2 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.31 (CSEL 17.229).

<sup>3</sup> Luke 17.10.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 11.35, 36.

through your name we trample down our adversaries.”<sup>1</sup> And again: “No man prevails by his own strength. The Lord makes his adversary weak.”<sup>2</sup> But perhaps I shall receive the answer: “Are we then not to offer thanks to God, not to render praises?” I think so, but the trouble is that when we do it, we do it in words only, and inwardly: to God we offer thanks in private, to ourselves in public: we render praise to God on our lips, but to ourselves both on our lips and in our heart. Lo, this is what often raises up the enemy when he is already humbled, for the sin of our vanity is his strength.

### *Chapter 7*

It is only humility of the heart, therefore, that by declaring itself weak can do all things, that achieves everything good by ascribing it always to God, not to itself. If one ascends in humility, he does not have room to fall. All the other virtues can summon us to perfection through high and difficult courses. Humility alone is on the level ground and, even though it seems lowly to others, it is actually higher than heaven, for it brings man to its kingdom by descending instead of ascending. Through humility the saints obtained the rewards of future blessedness, observing the words of the Lord: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup> He is truly humble who is poor in his own spirit, but rich in the Spirit of God. For he who is rich in his own spirit is like an inflated skin, filled with the puffing of pride.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. 43.6 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.17.4 (CSEL 17.218).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 2.9, 10.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5.3.

*Chapter 8*

Now your goodness must listen briefly while I explain how this virtue may be obtained. First of all, if you intend to start a good work, you will begin it not with the intention of acquiring praise, but for the love and desire of doing good. Then, when this good task, whatever it is, has been completed, you will guard your heart most cautiously, lest you fall under the influence of human favors and overestimate yourself, thus trying to please yourself or to look for some renown from any deed. For glory is like the human shadow: if you follow it, it runs away; if you run away, it follows. Always value yourself least of all and remember, whenever any good befalls you throughout your life, ascribe it all to God who gave it, not to yourself who received it, convincing yourself with these words of the Apostle Paul: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it?"<sup>1</sup> And also reflecting on these words of the Apostle: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights."<sup>2</sup> And when you have built in your heart a temple to the Holy Spirit, using these most precious stones of holy humility, then pray in it, using the song of the prophet David. Not in words only but in deeds shall you sing: "O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty; I busy not myself with great things, nor with things too sublime for me."<sup>3</sup> This song you will truly be able to offer to God, when you humiliate yourself and praise Him alone, to whom truly with all the faithful you may every day say: "To you we owe a hymn of praise,"<sup>4</sup> glorifying Him alone.

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1 1 Cor. 4.7 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.10 (CSEL 17.212).

2 James 1.17 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.10 (CSEL 17.212).

3 Ps. 130.1 in Cassian, *Inst.* 12.6.2 (CSEL 17.210).

4 Ps. 64.2.



## ANGER<sup>1</sup>

*(De ira)*

Bishop Martin to my most blessed and most beloved lord,  
brother in Christ, Bishop Vittimer.

### *Chapter 1*

While we were recently together and enjoying a mutual exchange of conversation, you urged me with love and affection to arrange a brief discussion of the passion of anger and of its mutual effects. I was delighted to comply immediately, and I have written at your desire these brief remarks on how to avoid anger or, if this cannot be accomplished, how to assuage it. Certain wise men have called anger a brief period of insanity, for it is powerless to control itself, even as it forgets honesty, is unmindful of friendly connections, is cut off from reason and counsels while agitated by false pretexts, is not adaptable to considerations of justice, is similar to a moral ill, and is crushed upon what it itself destroyed.

### *Chapter 2*

#### *The appearance of anger*

Its appearance is bold, its countenance threatening, its forehead gloomy, its gaze askance, its face either pale or ruddy; the blood seethes up from deep within, then it changes its

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 9-10.



color and becomes fierce instead of pleasant; its eyes flash and sparkle, its lips tremble, its teeth grind together, its breast is shaken by frequent and violent breathing, its groans are tormented, its speech pours forth in small explosions, the wild outbursts of the voice distend the neck; the hands are restless, there are frequent contractions and slappings of the fingers, the teeth chatter, the pace is hurried, the feet beat upon the ground, the limbs tremble, the whole body is seized with uncontrollable movements, producing mighty threats—anger in its horrible form so corrupts and inflates itself that you do not know whether the abomination or the deformity is greater. What sort of soul do you suppose there must be within when the outward appearance is so vile? Other vices are concealed and hidden; anger betrays itself and appears in the face; the greater it is, the more manifestly it is inflamed. Accordingly, nothing is less suitable to a wise man than to become angry.

### *Chapter 3*

#### *The effects of anger*

Anger turns everything from what is excellent and just into the opposite. Whomever it seizes, it does not allow him to remember his duty. Give it to a father, he is an enemy. Give it to a king, he is a tyrant. It is not even useful in battle, for it is prone to rash actions, and while it tries to bring dangers to bear, it does not watch out for other dangers and it falls into another's power while it is not in control of itself. Anger judges by what pleases itself, will not listen, leaves no room for aid. It does not allow its decision to be changed, even if it is definitely wrong. It loves and protects its own error and will not listen to argument, even though manifest truth is placed directly before it. Obstinacy is preferable to correction in its base undertakings. However idle the matters that have stirred

it up, it will persevere lest it appear to have begun without cause. And what is worse, when it is restrained it becomes more insistent and increases, as if the very act of deep anger were a proof that the anger is just. As its strength becomes greater in proportion to its threats, so it is the more to be hated when it is more terrifying. If it has no strength, it is more exposed to contempt and does not escape derision. It is more dangerous to fear it, safer to deride it. Anger subdues all the other passions, and there is no pretension of the soul in which anger is not dominant. In fact, anger can even dominate over avarice, which is the worst and most inflexible of the vices. How often in anger does the soul attack and scatter its own possessions? How often does it toss away goods valued at a great price? The violence of anger is sudden and total. It does not proceed gradually, but is full-grown at the moment of its inception; it does not harass souls as other vices do, but sweeps them away. Other vices entice, while anger rushes headlong like streams and blasts of wind, and none is more insistent, whether proud in its strength or mad in its frustration. Other vices are separated from reason, but anger is separated from sanity, for even when repulsed it does not become annoyed with itself, but when an adversary is removed, it turns its bites upon itself. Other vices seize their victims individually, anger sometimes publicly invades many at once. The whole population has never been overcome with a desire to commit fornication; the whole state has never placed all of its hopes on pecuniary gain; nor does ambition for office fill numbers of people, but only individual men. Into anger, however, men rush in groups as if in battle line.

#### *Chapter 4*

The first way to oppose anger is not to get angry; the second is to cease quickly; the third is also to cure another's

anger. The first thing, then, is not to fall into anger, but if it happens, the second remedy is not to sin in anger. Just as there is one course to preserve health of body, another to restore it, and another to heal bodies corrupted with disease; so also it is one thing to prevent anger from arising, another to put it down once it has arisen. Just as the upper region which is close to the stars is not condensed into cloud nor turned into a storm, but the lower regions are more often struck by lightning; in the same way the sublime soul is always quiet and situated in a tranquil spot, pushing beneath it all things that occasion anger, and so is found to be modest and worthy of veneration, while the soul that is busy with many things and trying various acts falls into numerous quarrels. One man fails to fulfill his hope, another puts him off, another interrupts him, and so he becomes impatient in all matters and angry for the slightest reasons, now at a person, now at a business transaction, now at a place, now at a time, now at himself. For the soul to be quiet it must not be wearied with performance of many things nor with great appetites beyond its strength. If things are light, it is easy to fit them to your shoulders and to transfer the load from one side to the other without falling.

### *Chapter 5*

Therefore, we must fight against the first causes of anger. Now a cause of anger is the feeling that one has been insulted, and in this we must not readily put our trust. Even open and certain conclusions should not be settled on too quickly, for sometimes lies appear to be true. Always put the matter off for a little while. Do not let your ears be eager to hear accusers. We should always be on the watch for one well-known vice of human nature, that what we hear against our wills we readily believe and become angry about. Many are impelled

by suspicions and put the worst interpretation upon the countenance and smiles of others, and so become angry at the innocent. Credulity causes a great deal of evil. Frequently, therefore, you must not even listen, but must remove suspicion from your mind. Arguments are never wanting and the incitements to conjecture are deceptive. One must employ straightforwardness and a kind interpretation of events. Believe nothing that does not clearly happen before your eyes and, whenever suspicions appear in the mind, credulity should be reprimanded. This reprimand will result in the habit of not believing easily.

If you do not wish to become angry, do not be curious. He who asks what is being said about himself and digs out unpleasant words, even though they were said in secret, but makes himself unhappy. The very act of interpreting them brings them to the point of appearing to be wrongs. Rather, in the interpretation certain matters should be defended, others granted, others made light of, and thus anger must be prevented in these ways. The wise man overlooks many wrongs and often does not take them as such, for he either does not know about them, or if he does, he makes fun of them and turns them into pleasantries. If he complains and suspects what is not so or turns slight matters into serious ones, he is himself approaching anger instead of anger approaching him; anger must never be summoned, but when it creeps in, it must be driven out. To pay no heed to injuries is a mark of magnanimity. Many have turned slight injuries against themselves by trying for revenge. The really great and noble soul listens to wrongs as securely as the larger wild animals hear the barking of small dogs. It is better to conceal a wrong than to avenge it. The wrongs of the powerful must be endured, not only with patience, but with a joyful mien. They will do it again if they believe that you have been hurt and they have been successful. It is not only inexpedient to avenge a wrong; sometimes, it is not even expedient to acknowledge one. You must

refrain from anger, then, whether the person who has troubled you is superior to you or equal or inferior. To fight with a superior is madness, with an equal, of doubtful outcome, with an inferior, shameful.

### *Chapter 6*

Of the things which commonly offend us, some are reported to us, some we hear ourselves, and some we see. Those which are reported ought not to be believed straightway, because some men lie in order to deceive, while others think they are not lying because they have themselves been deceived. One man curries favor by making a charge and makes up an injury just for the sake of talking. There is another who speaks in secret with evil intent in order to break up fast friendships or, at least, to pretend in your presence to be accusing his enemy. Is someone reported to have spoken slander of you? Consider whether you may have done this first. Think of how many you slander yourself. Think that some are not creating a wrong, but returning it; that some are even acting in our behalf; that some are against us only because forced; that some do not realize it; that some who do act with full knowledge do not have the wrong as their aim, but have succumbed to the charm of witty raillery, or they have done something because there was no other way to accomplish their desires, rather than for the purpose of harming us. In cases where you yourself have heard or seen something, you will consider the nature and intention of the doer, you will weigh the mind of the sinner. Did he do it on purpose or accidentally? Was he deceived or forced? Youth will excuse a child, for he does not know that he does wrong; candor will excuse a stranger, familiarity a member of your household. If he offended for the first time, consider how long he had been in your favor; if frequently, endure what you have often endured. Was he

ordered, forced by necessity? Why should you be angry with him? If you receive an injury, there is no injury in enduring as you have always done. Is he a judge? If he is punishing the guilty, yield to necessity. Is he a friend? He did it against his will. Is he an enemy? He did what he had to do. Is he a father? Consider that he has accomplished so much good that it is even right for him to cause an injury. Is it a dumb animal? If you get angry, you are imitating it. In short, if it is a good man who has done an injury, do not believe it; if it is a bad man, do not imitate him. Yield to one who is wiser, forgive a fool. Every man has a king's mind within him, so that he wants to have free power over others, but is unwilling for them to have it over him. He who bears in mind that there is always going to be something which will offend him will be least angry when it happens.

### *Chapter 7*

What is really stupid and base in all this is for the mind to get aroused over the smallest and most sordid matters. If your young slave is not agile enough, if your drinking water is too warm, if your bed is unmade or the table set carelessly, if a fly is not eagerly chased away, if a key carelessly falls from the hands of a slave—when this has not been done to spite you nor for the purpose of offending you, forgive the innocent. We are often foolishly aroused over things which have not deserved our wrath and cannot feel it. Is there anything madder than the insane act of pouring out against objects the bile that was gathered against men? That soul is ill and in a precarious condition which is disturbed by the slight breeze of such events. When both the soul and body are corrupted by pleasures, everything becomes unbearable, not because anger is hard, but because the one who suffers from it is soft. Nothing is more inclined to cause wrath than soft living, which is

intemperate and impatient. The sensibilities must be handled roughly to prevent them from feeling any but the most severe blows. One need not be angry to correct wrong-doers. Since anger is a sin of the soul, one must not correct a sinner with a sin. If the wise man were to become as angry as the baseness of someone's crimes demands, he would have to be insane rather than merely angry with him. Thefts, frauds, denials, and all such things are looked upon by the wise man as calmly as the doctor sees his patients. Anger must never be allowed to exist, therefore, though sometimes it may be simulated. If the lazy minds of your hearers are to be aroused, they must occasionally be inspired with fear, when reason does not succeed with them.

## *Chapter 8*

### *How anger may be lessened*

The foregoing words have been written so that no one shall fall into anger. But if anger has already burst through, the greatest remedy against it is to hold off for a while. What should be sought first is not that it grant pardon but that it use judgment. If you wait, it will stop; do not try to remove it all at once, for it has great force at first. It is conquered completely if it is seized by parts, until we ourselves may command what was to have been done by its direction. The first thing, therefore, is to let its heat cool down; then the fog which clouds the mind will diminish somewhat. Each one must fight with himself to remember that he should at least conceal his anger if he cannot overcome it. If it is given no chance to escape, its standards can be overwhelmed, but this is done at a great risk, for anger desires to leap out and enflame the eyes and change the face, and if it is allowed to show a little outside of us, it is already over us and, at the same time, is hidden

within the deep recesses of the heart and has to be endured rather than to endure itself. Consequently, let all its characteristics be changed to the opposite—the brow be relaxed, the voice be more gentle, the pace slower, and thus, little by little, the interior is made to conform to the exterior. So it happens that, even if someone knows about your anger, still no one will realize it. Thus our reflections make us more moderate if we take our own advice. Haven't we perhaps done something similar on occasion? Haven't we made the same mistake? Is it expedient for us to condemn in others what we have ourselves been unable to escape? It will make us even gentler if we reflect on the good that man with whom we are now angry once did for us; thus the present offense is redeemed by former merits. It also happens that our reputation for leniency will bring us much commendation, that forgiveness will make us very useful friends. There is nothing more praiseworthy than to exchange anger for friendship. Is someone angry? Challenge him with kindness instead. The quarrel is immediately dropped if there is desertion on either side; people do not fight unless evenly matched, but if there is a struggle from both sides, anger rushes in. The braver is the one who first steps back. The one who has often conquered is beaten. Did he hit you? Withdraw, for by hitting back you will give him an excellent opportunity to hit you frequently; then, when you finally wish to retreat, you will not be able to do so.

### *Chapter 9*

He who becomes angry with one who wrongs him places one vice against another. Doesn't it seem mad to kick a mule or to rip into a dog by which one has been bitten? "But," you say, "they do not know that they sin." A man who lacks sense is exactly in the same position. What difference does it make if he is unlike dumb animals in other ways, when he is similar



to them in using any vice to defend himself against them? Let us place ourselves in the same position as the one with whom we are angry. Let us imagine that we are in his place, for it is our own unjust evaluation that makes us angry, since we are not willing to suffer the very things which we want to do. Remember also that even the wisest men make some mistakes. If even the wise men sin, then whose wrong has no reason for being forgiven? There is no one so afraid of offenses that he does not commit them while avoiding them. He bears being despised with greater equanimity who recalls that there is no power so great that it is not attacked by injury. Let us give the sinner room in which he can consider what he has done; then he will correct himself. "What then," you say, "shall he go unpunished?" Forget your objections, for he will not. There is no one more seriously afflicted than one who is punished with repentance. Then, we must consider the situation of human affairs, that we may judge fairly everything that happens. He is unfair who charges individuals with a universal vice. We are all inconsiderate and lacking in foresight, all uncertain, complaining, ambitious. How can I hide a public evil under light words? All of us are evil. Whatever is found in someone else, each of us will find within himself. We are evil and we live among the evil.

### *Chapter 10*

Now, in the third place, let us consider how to alleviate another's anger, for we desire not only to be sane ourselves, but to make others sane. The beginning of anger in another we will not dare to soothe by the use of reason, for it is deaf and bitter. We will give it time, just as a doctor's remedies avail when an attack of illness is passing away rather than when it is coming on. On the other hand, if one tries to anoint the eyes while they are swollen, the illness is made more severe

by the attempt. The wise man will secretly remove from his angry friend all means of revenge, will himself pretend to be angry, so that as a sympathetic fellow sufferer his advice may have more authority. He will find ways to delay; while he is seeking greater punishment, he will postpone it for the present, and use all his skill to let the rage be calmed. If you get the upper hand, you will cause him without much resistance to be ashamed or afraid. To one you will say, "I am very upset and I can find no limit to my grief, but the time must be awaited: he'll pay for it. Keep it on your mind and, when you get the chance, pay him back with interest." To another you will say, "Don't let your anger delight your enemies"; to another, "Be careful not to lose your magnanimity and the strength which most people believe you to possess." In the same way a doctor will hide his scalpel, so that the sick man will feel pain when he is not expecting it. Some things can be cured only by deception. To correct an angry man by getting angry yourself is to spur him on.

Thus, in various ways, anger must be cured.



## REFORMING THE RUSTICS<sup>1</sup>

*(De correctione rusticorum)*

Bishop Martin to my most blessed and most beloved lord,  
brother in Christ, Bishop Polemius.

### *Chapter 1*

I have received your kind letter, in which you write me that I should send you something on the origin of idols and their sins, or, if I like, a few selections from the abundant material available, in order to chastise the rustics who are still bound by the old pagan superstition and offer more veneration to demons than to God. Since it is necessary to offer them some small explanation for these idols' existence from the beginning of the world to whet the appetite, as it were, I have had to touch upon a vast forest of past times and events in a treatise of very brief compass and to offer the rustics food seasoned with rustic speech. With God's aid, this is the way in which you will begin your sermon.

### *Chapter 2*

We desire, my dearest children, to report to you in the name of the Lord things which you have never heard or perhaps have heard and forgotten. We ask your favor, that you

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 10-11.

listen with greater attention to matters which are spoken for your salvation. It would take a long time to go completely through the divine Scriptures, but let us touch upon a few of many points, in order that you may keep at least a little in your memories.

### *Chapter 3*

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,<sup>1</sup> in His celestial habitation He created spiritual creatures, that is, angels, who should stand in His presence and praise Him. One of these, who had been appointed archangel, chief of them all, seeing himself so radiant and glorious, did not pay honor to God his Creator, but said that he was equal to Him; and for this act of pride he, along with many other angels who had agreed with him, was cast from that celestial abode into the air which is beneath the heavens; and he who had formerly been the archangel lost the light of his glory and became the devil, full of gloom and horror. Likewise, the other angels who had agreed with him were thrown out of heaven with him, lost their splendor, and became demons, while the rest of the angels, who had remained subject to God, still persevere in the glory of their brightness in the Lord's presence; and they are called holy angels, while those who were thrown out with their leader, Satan, because of their pride are called rebellious angels and demons.

### *Chapter 4*

After this fall of the angels, it pleased God to form man from the mud of the earth and place him in paradise; and He said to him that if he obeyed the precept of the Lord, he

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gen. 1.1.

might succeed without death to that celestial region from which those rebellious angels had fallen, but if he acted contrary to the precept of God, he should suffer death. Then the devil, seeing that man had been created to succeed to the place in the kingdom of God from which he had fallen, was induced by envy to persuade man to disobey the commands of God. For this offense man was cast from paradise into the exile of this world, where he should endure many labors and pains.

### *Chapter 5*

The first man was called Adam and his wife, whom God created from his flesh, was called Eve. From these two beings the whole human race was propagated. Then they forgot God their Creator and performed many sins and provoked God to wrath, as a result of which God sent a flood and destroyed them all with the exception of a single just man named Noe, whom he saved with his sons to reestablish the human race. From the first man, Adam, to the flood, there was a passage of 2242 years.

### *Chapter 6*

After the flood, the human race was again restored through the three sons of Noe, who had been saved with their wives. And when the multitude began to increase and fill the world, again men forgot God the Creator of the world and when they had abandoned the Creator they began to worship creatures.<sup>1</sup> Some paid homage to the sun, others the moon and stars, others fire, others deep water and springs of water, believing

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. 1.25.

that all of these had not been created by God for the use of man, but had sprung up as gods from themselves.

### *Chapter 7*

Then the devil or his ministers, the demons who had been cast out of heaven, seeing that ignorant men had dismissed God their Creator and were mistaking the creatures, began to appear to them in various forms and speak with them and demand of them that they offer sacrifices to them on lofty mountains and in leafy forests and worship them as God, assuming the names of wicked men who had spent their whole lives in crime and sin, so that one claimed to be Jupiter, who had been a soothsayer and involved in so many adulteries that he had taken his own sister, Juno, to wife and had corrupted his daughters, Minerva and Venus, and had even committed foul incest with his nieces and all his female relatives. Another demon called himself Mars, who had sown quarrels and discord. Then another demon chose to name himself Mercury, who had been the crafty inventor of all theft and deceit; to him as though to God men anxious for gain heap up piles of stones for a sacrifice whenever they pass a crossroads. Another demon took for himself the name of Saturn, who had lived amid all sorts of cruelty, even devouring his own sons at their birth. Another demon claimed to be Venus; she had been a prostitute and not only participated in innumerable adulteries, but had even committed incest with her father, Jupiter, and her brother, Mars.

### *Chapter 8*

Lo, such was the nature in the days of those perverse men, whom the ignorant rustics basely honored by their own evil

conduct, and whose names the demons had assumed in order that the rustics might worship them as gods and offer them sacrifices and imitate the deeds of those whose names they invoked. The demons even persuaded them to build temples to them and to place therein images or statues of wicked men and to set up altars to them, upon which they should pour out for them blood both of animals and even of men. Furthermore, many of the demons who had been expelled from heaven now preside over the sea or streams or fountains or forests, and in similar fashion ignorant men who do not know God worship them as gods and offer them sacrifice. In the sea, they call upon Neptune; in the streams, the Lamias; in the fountains, the nymphs; in the forests, the Dianas, which are all worthless demons and evil spirits, who trouble and harm infidels who do not know how to fortify themselves with the sign of the cross. They do not harm them without God's consent, however; for the infidels have angered God and do not believe wholeheartedly in the faith of Christ, but are such disbelievers that they place the very names of the demons on each day of the week, and speak of the day of Mars and of Mercury and of Jupiter and of Venus and of Saturn, who never created a day, but were evil and wicked men among the race of the Greeks.

### *Chapter 9*

Now, when Almighty God made heaven and earth, he first created light,<sup>1</sup> which revolved seven times to set apart the works of God. For God first made light, which is called day;<sup>2</sup> and on the second day the firmament of heaven was made;<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gen. 1.3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gen. 1.5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gen. 1.6-8.



and on the third the land was divided from the sea;<sup>4</sup> on the fourth the sun and moon and stars were made;<sup>5</sup> on the fifth quadrupeds and flying and swimming creatures;<sup>6</sup> on the sixth man was formed;<sup>7</sup> and on the seventh day, when the whole world and its ornaments were completed, God called for rest.<sup>8</sup> The single light, which was made first in the works of God, revolved seven times to distinguish the works of God, and was called the week.<sup>9</sup> What madness it is for a man baptized in the faith of Christ not to honor the Lord's Day, on which Christ rose, but to say that he honors the days of Jupiter and Mercury and Venus and Saturn, who have no day, but were adulterers, soothsayers, and wicked men who had come to a bad end in their own country! Yet, as we have said, under the form of these names, veneration and honor are offered by foolish men to demons.

### *Chapter 10*

Likewise, that error has overtaken ignorant rustics of thinking that the first day of January is the beginning of the year, which is completely false. For, as Holy Scripture says, the beginning of the first year came on March 25 at equinox. For thus we read: "And God divided the light from the darkness."<sup>1</sup> Now every exact division has equality, just as it happens that on March 25 the day and the night have exactly the same number of hours. Therefore, it cannot be right that the first day of January is the beginning of the year.

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4 Cf. Gen. 1.9, 10.

5 Cf. Gen. 1.14-19.

6 Cf. Gen. 1.20-23.

7 Cf. Gen. 1.26, 27.

8 Cf. Gen. 2.2.

9 Latin *septimana*.

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1 Gen. 1.4.

*Chapter 11*

Now what must we say with sorrow of that very foolish superstition by which they observe days for moths and mice; when, if it be right to mention it, a Christian man worships mice and moths instead of God? If the bread or cloth is not taken away from them and protected in a little box or basket, they will never spare what they find simply for your dedicating a holiday to them. It is without justification that wretched man sets up practices by which he may assure himself through the whole year of being as prosperous and successful in all things as he is at the beginning of the year. These are all pagan practices, thought up through the inventiveness of demons. Woe to that man who does not have God in his favor and does not possess sufficient bread and security of life granted by Him! Yet you perform these idle superstitions either secretly or openly, and you never cease from these sacrifices to demons. Why, then, do they not help you to be continually prosperous and safe and happy? Why is it that, when God is angry, these idle sacrifices do not defend you from the locust, from the mouse, and from the many other tribulations which an angry God sends you?

*Chapter 12*

Don't you clearly understand that the demons are lying to you in these superstitious practices which you vainly observe, and that they are making fun of you in the auguries which you frequently witness? As the most wise Solomon said: "Divinations and omens are unreal";<sup>1</sup> the more a man fears in these things, the more his heart is deceived. "Fix not your heart on it. For they have led many astray."<sup>2</sup> Lo, this is what

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ecclus.* (*Sir.*) 34.5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ecclus.* (*Sir.*) 34.6, 7.

the Holy Scripture says, and it is most certainly true, for as long as unhappy men entice demons through birds' songs, as long as they destroy their faith in Christ in frivolous and idle ways, so long will they continue to rush unexpectedly to their own final destruction. God did not order man to know the future, but that he should always live in fear of Him and ask Him for guidance and help in his life. God alone possesses foreknowledge of events; but demons delude silly men with various fables, until they cause them to offend God and drag their souls with them to hell, just as they did in the beginning for envy, lest man enter the kingdom of heaven from which they were expelled.

### *Chapter 13*

For this reason also, when God saw that wretched men are so deceived by the devil and his wicked angels that they forget their Creator and worship demons instead of God, He sent His Son, that is, His Wisdom and His Word, to recall them to the worship of the true God from the error of the devil. And because the divinity of the Son of God could not be seen by men, He received human flesh from the womb of the Virgin Mary, not conceived by marriage with a man, but of the Holy Spirit. The Son of God, born into human flesh, the invisible God hidden within, but a visible man without, preached to men: He taught them to leave their idols and their wicked works, to desert the power of the devil, and to return to the worship of their Creator. After He had taught, He willed to die for the human race. He suffered death voluntarily, not unwillingly. He was crucified by the Jews under the judge, Pontius Pilate, who was born in the province of Pontus and was, at that time, governor of the province of Syria; He was taken from the cross and laid in the tomb; on the third day He rose alive from the dead, and for forty days He conversed

with His twelve disciples, and to show them that His true flesh had been resurrected He ate after the Resurrection in the company of His disciples. At the end of the forty days, He bade His disciples to tell all nations of the Resurrection of the Son of God and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins, and to teach those who had been baptized to depart from their evil ways, that is, from idols, from homicide, from theft, from perjury, from fornication, and not to do to others what they were unwilling to have done to themselves. And after He had preached thus, He ascended to heaven in the sight of His disciples and there sits at the right hand of the Father, and thence will come at the end of this world in the very flesh He took away with Him to heaven.

#### *Chapter 14*

When the end of this world comes, all nations and every man who has his origin from those first human beings, that is, from Adam and Eve, shall arise, both the good and the bad; and all shall come before the judgment of Christ and, then, those who have been during their lives faithful and good shall be separated from the bad and shall enter the kingdom of God with His holy angels, and their souls shall be reunited with their flesh in eternal rest, nevermore to die, where there shall be no labor and no pain, no sorrow, no hunger nor thirst, no heat nor cold, no darkness nor night; but ever happy, satisfied, in light, in glory, they shall be like the angels of God, because they have deserved to enter that place from which the devil and the angels who conspired with him fell. There all who have been faithful to God shall remain forever. But those who have been unbelievers or have not been baptized or, even though baptized, have after their baptism returned to idols and homicide and adultery and perjury and other

wicked ways and who died without repentance; all who have been found such shall be condemned with the devil and with all the demons whom they worshiped and whose works they performed and shall be sent in the flesh to eternal fire in hell, where that inextinguishable fire lives forever and that flesh now recovered at the resurrection suffers eternal torments and groaning. It wants to die again that it may not feel the punishment, but it is not permitted to die that it may suffer everlasting torments. Lo, this is what the law says and the prophets; this the Gospel of Christ, this the Apostle, this all Holy Scripture asserts, just as we have finished telling you in brief. Henceforth, it is up to you, my dear sons, to remember the words that we have spoken, and either by doing good to hope for future repose in the kingdom of God, or (and may this not come true!) by doing evil to await the perpetual fire to be found in hell. Both the life eternal and death eternal lie within man's choice. Whatever each one chooses for himself, that shall he have.

### *Chapter 15*

O faithful, you who have come to the baptism of Christ in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, consider the nature of the pact which you made with God in this baptism. For as each of you gave your name at the font, for example, Peter or John or any name, you were thus questioned by the priest: "What is your name?" You replied, if you were old enough, or at least the one who made the profession of faith for you and who lifted you up from the font, and said, for example: "His name is John." And the priest asked: "John, do you renounce the devil and his messengers, his worship and idols, his theft and fraud, his fornication and drunkenness, and all his evil works?" And you replied: "I do renounce them." After this renunciation of

the devil, you were again asked by the priest: "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?" You replied: "I do believe." "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our God and Lord, who was born of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and buried, descended into hell, and on the third day rose alive from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead? Do you believe?" And you answered: "I do believe." And again you were asked: "Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of all sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?" And you replied: "I do believe." Consider, then, what sort of pact you made with God in baptism. You promised to renounce the devil and his messengers and all his wicked ways, and you professed that you believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and that, at the end of the world, you hope for the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

### *Chapter 16*

Lo, such is the guarantee and confession of yours that God holds against you! How is it possible that some of you who have renounced the devil and his messengers and his worship and his evil ways turn again to the worship of the devil? To light candles beside rocks and beside trees and beside fountains and at crossroads, what else is this but worship of the devil? To observe divinations and auguries and days for idols, what else is this but worship of the devil? To observe Vulcan's day<sup>1</sup> and the Kalends, to set out tables, to put up laurel wreaths, to watch the foot, to pour fruit and wine on a log in the hearth, to throw bread into a fountain, what else is this but worship of the devil? For women at their weaving to call

<sup>1</sup> August 23.

on the name of Minerva and to observe the day of Venus in weddings and to be careful about the day on which one commences a journey, what else is this but worship of the devil? To chant over herbs to make poisons, and to invoke the names of demons in incantations, what else is this but worship of the devil? And many other things which it would take too long to mention here. Lo, you do all these things after renunciation of the devil, after baptism, and by returning to the worship of demons and to the evil works of idols you have transgressed your faith and have broken the pact which you made with God. You have given up the sign of the cross, which you received in baptism, and pay attention to other signs of the devil, such as the flight of birds and sneezing and many other things. Why is it that augury does no harm to me or to any proper Christian? Because where the sign of the cross precedes, there is no sign of the devil. Why does it harm you? Because you despise the sign of the cross and fear what you yourselves make into a sign. Similarly, you have given up the sacred incantation, I mean the creed you accepted in baptism, which is: "I believe in God the Father Almighty," and the Lord's Prayer, that is, "Our Father who art in heaven,"<sup>2</sup> and you retain the devil's incantations and charms. Whoever, then, scorns the sign of the cross of Christ, but looks for other signs, has lost the sign of the cross which he received in baptism. Similarly, he who clings to other incantations invented by magicians and evil-doers has lost the incantation of the holy creed and of the Lord's Prayer, which he received in the faith of Christ, and has trodden under foot that faith of Christ, for God and the devil cannot be worshiped together.

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. 6.9.

*Chapter 17*

If then, my dearest children, you have understood everything that we have said, if anyone realizes that after receiving baptism he has done these things and broken the faith of Christ, let him not despair of himself, nor say in his heart: "Because I have done such evils after baptism, perhaps God will not forgive my sins." Do not doubt the mercy of God. Only perform in your heart your pact with God not to practice the worship of demons any more, nor to worship anything except the God of heaven, nor to commit homicide, nor to be involved in adultery or fornication or theft, nor to swear falsely. And when you have promised God this with your whole heart and have not committed these sins again, hope confidently for pardon from God, for thus saith the Lord through the writings of the prophets: "On whatever day the wicked man turns away from his sins and does what is just, I too will not remember his crimes."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, God awaits the sinner's repentance. The true repentance consists of a man not doing again the evils which he did, but asking pardon for past sins and watching in the future not to fall into them again; but, on the contrary, to perform good works, to offer alms to a poor man who is hungry, to refresh a tired stranger, and to do to another whatever one would like to have done by another, and not to do to another what one would not like to have done to oneself, for in this law the commandment of God is fulfilled.

*Chapter 18*

Accordingly we ask you, dearest brothers and children, to keep in mind those precepts which God has seen fit to give

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ezech.* 18.21, 22.



you through our most humble and insignificant selves, and to think how you may save your souls, that you may not only deal with this present life and the transitory, practical things of this world, but may rather recall what you promised to believe in the creed, the resurrection of the flesh and eternal life. If you have believed and do believe that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh and life eternal in the kingdom of heaven among the angels of God, as we have already told you, then think upon it with all your power, rather than always upon the misery of the present world. Prepare your way in good works. Go often to church and to holy places to pray to God. Do not neglect the Lord's Day, but hold it in reverence, because on it the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, arose from the dead. Do not perform servile work on the Lord's Day in field, meadow, vineyard, or any such important place, except only what pertains to cooking food to refresh the body or what is necessary for a long journey. You may make a journey on the Lord's Day to places nearby, but not for evil reasons, rather for good reasons, such as walking to holy places, visiting a brother or a friend, consoling the sick, or carrying counsel or aid for a good cause to one in trouble. Thus the Christian should honor the Lord's Day. It is quite disgraceful that the pagans who do not know the faith of Christ, but worship idols and demons, should honor the day of Jupiter or any other demon and abstain from work, when demons certainly never created and do not have any day. Yet we, who worship the true God and believe that the Son of God rose from the dead, do not honor the day of the Resurrection, the Lord's Day. Do not do wrong to the Resurrection of the Lord, but honor it and hold it in reverence for the sake of the hope which we have in it. For just as He, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is our Head, rose from the dead on the third day, so, too, do we hope that we who are His members shall rise in our flesh at the end of the world, that each may

receive eternal rest or eternal punishment, according to what he has done in his body in this world.

### *Chapter 19*

Behold, with the testimony of God and His holy angels who are listening to us as we speak, we have fulfilled what was due to your goodness, and have lent you the money of the Lord, as we were commanded. It is for you now to think and work, so that each one of you may return as much as he received and with interest when the Lord comes on the day of judgment. We pray the mercy of the Lord Himself, that He keep you from all harm and make you worthy companions of His holy angels in His kingdom, through Him who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.



## RULES FOR AN HONEST LIFE<sup>1</sup>

*(Formula vitae honestae)*

Martin, humble bishop, to King Miro, most glorious and most serene and endowed with outstanding piety towards the Catholic faith.

### *Chapter 1*

I am not unaware, most clement king, that the burning thirst of your mind is insatiably eager for the cups of wisdom, and that you ardently require those liquids which fill the streams of moral wisdom, and that for this reason you often write to my humble self and ask me to keep sending your worthiness some letter of advice or exhortation, whatever words I may have to offer. But although your praiseworthy zeal for piety demands this of me, I know that unwonted effrontery by my humble self will be straightway denounced by the more cautious if I approach the nobility of your royal reverence with words that are either too importunate or undignified, as the case may be. Therefore, lest by what I say I abuse the freedom of your kind invitation or, on the other hand, reject your desire by my silence, I have confidently offered this little treatise to be read for your eager ears, a work that is not polished with sophistic display, but put together with plainness and purest simplicity. I have composed it, not especially for your instruction, for you already possess the sagacity of natural wisdom, but rather in a general

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 11-13.

way for those who are your close servants and who may profit by reading, understanding, and remembering these precepts. The title of this little book is *Rules for an Honest Life*, which I have so entitled not because it preaches those difficult and perfect practices which can be achieved only by a few outstanding worshipers of God, but rather because it gives advice which, even without the precepts of the divine Scriptures, may be fulfilled under the natural law of human intelligence, even by the laity if they will live rightly and honorably.

### *Chapter 1a*

Four forms of virtues have been defined in the sayings of many wise men, with which the human mind needs to be equipped if it is to approach an honest life: the first of these is prudence, the second magnanimity, the third continence, the fourth justice. Each of these, through the practices explained below, makes a man honest and morally right.

### *Chapter 2*

If you desire to follow prudence, whoever you are, then you will live rightly and with reason if you first judge and weigh everything in advance and place a value upon things from their own natural worth rather than from what most people think of them. You must know that some things do not appear good, yet are, while some appear so and are not. If you possess anything of a transitory nature, do not admire it nor value greatly something destined to perish nor preserve what you have in your possession as though it belonged to someone else, but use it and dispense it in your behalf on the assumption that it is your own. If you would embrace prudence, you will remain the same everywhere, you will accommodate your-

self to the occasion, as the variety of circumstances demands, nor will you change in certain things, but rather adapt yourself, like the hand, which is the same both when extended into a palm and when clenched into a fist. It is the peculiar quality of a prudent man to examine counsels and not to slip into falsities from too easy credulity. Do not make up your mind on doubtful matters, but reserve your judgment. Do not swear that anything is so, for not everything that appears to be true is immediately true; just as, often, what at first seems unbelievable is not immediately false. As a matter of fact, the truth often retains the appearance of a lie, while a lie is frequently hidden by the appearance of truth. Just as a friend sometimes wears a stern countenance and a flatterer a pleasant expression, so verisimilitude puts on ornaments and makes itself attractive in order to deceive or rob. If you would be prudent, gaze into the future and place before your mind everything that can happen. Do not let anything sudden take place, but foresee everything in advance. The prudent man does not say: "I did not think this would happen," because he is not in doubt, but expects; does not suspect, but takes precautions. Seek the cause of every deed: when you have found its beginning, you will reflect upon its end. Know that in certain matters you should persevere because you have begun; certain ones you should not even begin, for to persevere in them is harmful. The prudent man does not wish to deceive, cannot be deceived. Let your opinions be judgments. Do not harbor thoughts that are vague or dreamlike, which will leave you sad after you have settled your affairs if you allow them to delight your mind. Your thought must be stable and certain; whether it deliberates or seeks an answer or is in contemplation, it must not depart from the truth. Your conversation should not be idle, but delivered to persuade or advise or console or instruct. Praise sparingly, criticize more sparingly. For excess praise is just as reprehensible as too much blame; the former is open to suspicion of flattery, the latter to

suspicion of evil intentions. Render your judgment on the basis of the truth, not of friendship. Think carefully before you promise, fulfill more fully than you promised. If you are prudent, your mind will be organized according to three periods of time: set in order the present, foresee the future, recall the past. For he who does not think about the past loses his life; he who does not reflect on the future falls into everything unsuspecting. Place before your mind both the evil and the good that may happen, that you may endure the former, moderate the latter. Do not always be doing something, but sometimes let your mind be at rest, though your rest itself should be filled with pursuit of wisdom and good thoughts. The prudent man at leisure is never idle. He allows his mind to relax sometimes, but never to be disengaged. He speeds up the slow, unravels the entangled, softens the harsh, makes easier the difficult. He knows what should be approached and where, and quickly and with discernment he sees through, one by one, the counsels of the unskilled. He judges the uncertain from the certain, the great from the small, the remote from the near, the whole from the parts. Do not let the authority of the speaker influence you, but pay attention to what he says rather than to the person, and consider what sort of people you please rather than how many. Look for something that can be found, learn something that can be known, hope for something that can be hoped for in public. Do not place yourself in a loftier position where you will be afraid to stand up and will fall when you come down. When the prosperity of this life allures you, then, especially, you need to seek salutary counsels. Then you will take your stand and support yourself, as in a slippery place, and not allow yourself impetuous freedom of motion, but will look around to see where and how far you must go.

*Chapter 3*

If magnanimity, which is also called fortitude, is in your mind, you will live with much confidence, free, without fear, joyous. It is a great good of the human mind not to worry, but to stand upright and to await the end of this life without nervous misgivings. If you are magnanimous, you will never think that anyone is insulting you. Of your enemy you will say: "He did not harm me, though he intended to harm," and when you have him in your power, you will consider that vengeance consists of the ability to avenge. Be sure that the honest, truly great sort of vengeance is to pardon. Do not whisper about anyone, do not try to undermine him, but advance openly. Do not wage war unless you have declared it: treachery and deceit are proper to the weak. You will be great in spirit if you neither look for dangers as the rash man nor tremble at them as the timorous. The only thing that makes a soul timid is the guilty conscience of a bad life.

*Chapter 4*

If you love continence, cut off what is superfluous and confine your desires to narrow limits. Consider how much nature demands, not how much your own cupidity seeks. If you would be continent, you must reach the point of being satisfied with yourself, for he who is sufficient to himself was born with riches. Put a check on your desire and reject all enticements that attract the mind with secret pleasure. Eat less than you need to be filled, drink less than you need to become intoxicated. Be careful at banquets or any social affairs not to appear to condemn those whom you do not imitate. Do not spend too much time on present pleasures nor long for those you do not have. Your table should be set simply: approach for nourishment, not for pleasure. Your hunger rather than your nose



should excite your palate. Satisfy your desires as slightly as possible, for the only thing you should care about is that they cease. Thus, as though you were fashioned after a divine model, withdraw as much as possible from the body to the spirit. If you desire continence, live in a healthful though not luxurious manner, and prefer that the house be known because of its master rather than the master because of the house. Do not pretend to be what you are not, nor desire what you are to seem greater than you are. Rather be careful not to let poverty seem to you a thing unclean, nor parsimony beneath you, nor simplicity lack of care, nor gentleness lack of energy; if the things you possess are few, at least let them not confine you. Do not weep over what you possess nor covet what is another's. If you love continence, avoid base things before they happen, and do not fear anyone more than yourself. Consider everything enduring except baseness. Refrain even from base words, for free use of them nourishes impudence. Prefer conversation that is useful rather than eloquent and affable, forthright rather than obsequious. You will, at times, mix light matters with serious, but temperately and without violating dignity and a sense of decency. Laughter is reprehensible if it is immoderate, if it is childish effuse, if it is giddy after the manner of women. Laughter also makes a man despised if it is high and loud or ill-meant and secret or evoked by the misfortunes of others. In short, if the occasion demands pleasantries, conduct yourself even here with dignity and wisdom, so that no one will become harsh with you for your asperity or despise you as of no account. You will have a pleasing sense of humor and not act the buffoon. Your wit will be without ill-will, your jokes without malice, your laughter without raucousness, your voice without shouting, your pace without rushing. Your rest will not be from laziness, and when others are playing, you will busy yourself with something holy and honorable. If you are continent, avoid flattery and let it be as unpleasant a criticism to you to be

praised by shameful people as if you were praised for shameful deeds. Be happier when you displease evil people and consider as true praise of yourself the evil thoughts that evil people think about you. The most difficult task of continence is to ward off the pleasantries of flatterers, whose words unnerve the mind by a kind of pleasure. Do not win friendship by agreeing with someone, nor let any approach you easily in order to win your favor. Do not be bold or arrogant. Be submissive, not abject, preserving your dignity. Take advice willingly, take criticism patiently. If someone criticizes you and you deserve it, know that he has helped you; if you did not deserve it, know that he wanted to help you. It is not harsh, but soft words that you will fear. Flee from vices yourself, do not examine others critically nor scold them bitterly, but correct them without harsh reproach, prefacing your admonition with some pleasant remark. Be quick to forgive a mistake. Do not praise anyone too much nor criticize him too much. Be a silent listener to those who talk, an eager receiver of those who listen. When asked a question, give a ready reply; if someone would quarrel, quickly withdraw; do not stoop to disputes and arguments. If you are continent, watch the movements of your mind and body, lest they become improper; do not disregard the former because they are concealed, for it makes no difference whether no one sees them, so long as you see them yourself. Be subject to change without fickleness; be constant without obstinacy. If you have knowledge of something, do not conceal it; yet do not be disagreeably insistent about it. Consider everyone equal to you: if they are inferior, do not become haughty and show disdain; if they are superior, live rightly and do not fear them. In showing readiness to render service, be neither negligent nor demanding. Be kind to all, fawning on no one, familiar with but a few, just and fair to everyone. Be more severe in your judgment than in your words, in your life than in outward appearance, a kind avenger, one who hates fierce actions, neither spread-

ing your own good fame nor envying that of your neighbors, not at all credulous of rumors, accusations, and suspicions. On the contrary, stand firmly against ill-natured persons who creep up to harm others under the pretense of frankness of speech. Be slow to anger, ready to show mercy, resolute in adversity, cautious and humble in prosperity, hiding your virtues as others do their vices. Disdain vainglory and do not be bitter in exacting the advantages that your position makes justly yours. Do not look down on another's lack of prudence. Speak rarely, endure the loquacious. Be severe and serious, but do not cast aside those of lighter interests. Desire wisdom and be eager for instruction. Share your knowledge without arrogance with anyone who asks for it. Ask without concealing your ignorance to be informed about anything that you do not know.

### *Chapter 5*

The next virtue is justice. What is justice but a silent agreement of nature invented for the aid of many? And what is justice if not our own makeup, and yet at the same time a divine law and the bond of human society? In this, there is no need for us to consider what is expedient. The expedient will be whatever it commands. If any of you desire to observe justice, first fear God and love God, that you may be loved by God. You will love God if you imitate Him in desiring to do good to everyone and harm to no one; then they will call you a just man, all will follow, reverence, and love you. To be just, you will not only refrain from doing harm, but will keep others from doing harm. For abstinence from wrongdoing is not justice, but the restraint of another is. Begin here, then, that you do not lose your good intention. Then go on to greater things, such as restoring what others have carried away; punish and circumvent the robbers, so that others will not

need to fear them. Do not pick a quarrel from the uncertain interpretation of words, but consider the mind's intent. It should make no difference to you whether you affirm or swear; wherever truth is at stake, faith and religion are concerned, you may be sure. For even though God is not invoked at an oath—for He does witness even though one does not invoke Him—still you will not violate the truth, lest you violate the law of justice. But if you are sometimes forced to make use of a lie, use it to guard the truth rather than falsehood, and if it happens that confidence placed in you can be redeemed with a lie, you will not lie, but rather make excuses, for, where a cause is honest, the just man does not betray secrets. He keeps silent about things that should not be revealed, he speaks what should be spoken, and thus he has abiding peace, security, and serenity. While others are overcome by evils, evils are overcome by him. If you take care to pursue this course, awaiting the end of your journey with joy and without fear, you will look forward to the woes of this world with pleasure, its anxieties with calm, and its last moment with serenity.

### *Chapter 6*

By these principles these four forms of virtue will make of you a perfect man, if you keep them righteously and in due measure and set proper bounds to your life.

For, if prudence exceeds its bounds, you will be overastute and fearful and cautious; you will turn out to be an investigator of secrets and of all sorts of harmful things. You will be known as one who attends to petty details, is suspicious, nervously alert, always afraid of something, always looking for something, always denouncing something; you will use your flimsiest suspicions to detect what has happened. People will point at you as one full of ruses, a hypocrite, an enemy of simplicity, one who talks a great deal about others' guilt; in

short, everyone will call you a bad man. Prudence, if not held within bounds, will lead you into these faults, but he who persists in it with scales balanced has in him nothing stupid and deceitful.

### *Chapter 7*

If magnanimity be carried beyond its limits, it will make a man threatening, puffed up, anxious, uneasy, neglectful of honesty, quick to hasten into any refinement of words and deeds; he will keep raising his eyebrows like an animal trainer to stir up the animals, striking one, jabbing at another. But however bold a fighter he is, he will not be able to withstand the many powerful forces outside of himself, but he either will come to a wretched end or leave behind unpleasant memories of himself. The measure of magnanimity, then, is for a man to be neither timid nor bold.

### *Chapter 8*

Continence should constrain you within these limits: be careful not to be stingy, do not suspiciously or timidly withdraw your hand, do not hold up a mirror even in the smallest matters. For such well-trimmed integrity will bring you shame. You will, accordingly, observe continence with this aim of moderation, so that you will neither surrender to pleasure nor be sordid or mean because of greedy stinginess.

### *Chapter 9*

Finally, justice must be controlled by holding fast to the mean, lest the mind's power to reason be unmoved by slight influences and fall into negligence, while you have no concern

to correct either the great or the smallest sins of those in error, but rather grant license to sin to those who pleasantly curry your favor or insolently make fun of you; on the other hand, do not appear a threat to human society because you are too excessively rigid without making allowance for forgiveness or a kindly disposition. The rule of justice which would be loved must be so observed that it will not lose its influence and respect through general neglect and, at the same time, will not be deprived of the favor of man's fondness for it by prolonged and excessive severity.

### *Chapter 10*

If anyone would honorably devote his life to the advantage, not only of himself, but to that of many, he must observe the rules for the practice of the aforementioned virtues according to the mean, giving attention to considerations of time, place, persons, and circumstances, in order that, from his lofty position with steep heights and precipices on both sides of him, he may, while retaining his senses, avoid the insanity that rushes upon him and rise above his base inadequacy.



## TRIPLE IMMERSION<sup>1</sup>

*(De trina mersione)*

Bishop Martin to Bishop Boniface, most blessed and most revered lord, worthy of honor for the perfection of apostolic charity, lord and father in Christ.

### *Chapter 1*

The much hoped-for letter from your apostolic dignity has overwhelmed me doubly with the gift of holy inspiration; first, that you look upon my abject, insignificant, and humble self with your usual episcopal favor; then, that you combine this very kind epistolary exchange with the ardent warmth of pure charity. This series of desirable events makes it proper that we, too, who now grasp the full measure of your consummate charity, should undertake to continue this correspondence. Therefore, I return to your most holy apostolic dignity the debt involved by epistolary courtesy, asking that in your prayers, which are ever acceptable to God, you include mention of our unworthy person.

### *Chapter 2*

As to what you have indicated in your letter to us, that certain people from our country while traveling in your terri-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 13-14.



tory have brought a report to your ears that holy baptism is performed by the priests of this province, not in the single name, but in the names of the Trinity, you must know that this is completely and totally false. I believe that whoever chose to give you such information has either never seen bishops baptizing or, at any rate, wanted to report something that had been done here previously. I have learned for certain that some years ago the metropolitan of this province asked for the formula of baptism that had the surest authenticity directly from the See of the most blessed Peter. Upon reading a copy of it very carefully, I found the statement that the one who is to be baptized must be dipped or immersed three times in the single name of the Trinity.<sup>1</sup>

### *Chapter 3*

Now you say: "The triple invocation of the name and the triple immersion is certainly Arian." Here is my answer: to be immersed thrice in the single name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is an ancient and apostolic tradition, which the priests of this province possess in written form on the authority of the Bishop of Rome. This same custom was observed at Easter by the Bishop of Constantinople in the presence of delegates appointed from this kingdom to the imperial court. We have also read the letter of blessed Paul the apostle, in which it is written: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism:"<sup>1</sup> and the exposition of the blessed Jerome, in which he confirms that they are to be immersed thrice with the invocation of the single name.<sup>2</sup> If you wish to see it, you will find the book itself, written on papyrus and very old, in the possession of our venerable and holy brother the priest, Ausen-

1 *Epistola Vigili ad Profuturum* (PL 69.15-19).

1 Eph. 4.5.

2 *Contra Luciferianos* 12 (PL 23.166-167).

tius. Likewise, in the *Acts of Saint Silvester* warning was given to Constantine in a vision and he was commanded to be immersed three times.<sup>3</sup> Many, hearing the words of the Apostle: "one baptism," have tried to understand this as referring to a single immersion rather than to the unity of the Catholic faith in this, that baptism everywhere should be celebrated in a single manner. Then, in attempting to avoid approaching the custom of the Arians, who also immerse three times but in a single name, as we do, they changed the formula of the ancient tradition so that there should be a single immersion under a single name, not realizing that the unity of the substance is revealed in the single name, but the distinction of the three persons in the triple immersion, so that—just as we believe in all truth—we demonstrate the single substance but the three persons of the Godhead. For if there is a single immersion under a single name, then only the unity of the Deity in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost is demonstrated, but no difference of persons is shown.

#### *Chapter 4*

The result is that while they try to avoid approaching the Arians, they unknowingly come near to the Sabellian heresy, which, in retaining single immersion under a single name, claims that the Father is the same as the Son and the Holy Ghost and that the Holy Ghost is the same as the Father. While not revealing in the sacrament of baptism any distinction of the three persons, it supposes, contrary to true faith, that there is a single person in the three words. Consequently some of the Spaniards, understanding, as it is written: "neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion,"<sup>1</sup> in trying to avoid approaching the Arians, as we have said,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Edictum Constantini Magni* (PL 8.572).

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 1.7.

fell unawares into another heresy. The Arians make use of the Psalm, the Apostle, the Gospels, and many other things, just as the Catholics do—do we, for that reason, reject all these things in order not to approach their error? Far from it; rather it is they who have departed from us, as it is written, for they retain everything that we observe except for lessening the divinity of the Son of God and of the Holy Ghost.

### *Chapter 5*

But, as I have said, some have not foreseen this line of reasoning and have preferred to observe a single immersion. Then, to give some authority to their audacity, they have claimed that this was initiated by certain councils to avoid resemblance to the Arians, which is completely false. There never was any general or any local council which expressed an opinion in favor of single immersion. If anyone claims that this is so, let him produce the document and show where it was written, by whom it was done, and how many fathers signed the decree. If they are unable to show this, they may with confidence believe us concerning what has been handed down through the authority of the See of Rome, what is demonstrated by the earliest practice of the Oriental provinces, and what is written in the interpretations of the ancient fathers, and in the documents that contain the liturgical rites for administering the sacraments, namely, that just as we say that in the single name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, there is one substance of the three, so also without doubt, when we practice the triple immersion of believers, we signify the distinction of the three persons.

This I have compressed into the brevity of a page at the prompting of your request; I ask that you deign to remember before God our frailty.

## EASTER<sup>1</sup>

*(De pascha)*

### *Chapter 1*

Many have tried to unravel the mystery of Easter and at the same time to make it understandable by a calculation of the month, the moon, and the day; but either because it is impossible to know or because it is difficult to put into words, they have left it rather obscure, as if they had said nothing about it. I know that many have tried to investigate in great detail why we celebrate Easter on different days according to a computation of the moon, following Jewish custom; they declare that it seems more correct to them that the commemoration of the Lord's Passion be the most important factor, and that just as we observe our birthday on a single day every year, so we should follow the custom observed by most of the bishops of Gaul until quite recent times: that Easter should always be celebrated on March 25, on which date the Resurrection of Christ is reported to have taken place. I also have decided to investigate carefully and to explain clearly the observances of our ancestors.

### *Chapter 2*

The Passion of Christ is the redemption of the creature, of which the Apostle said: "It was made subject to slavery—not

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction pp. 14-15.

by its own will but by reason of him who made it subject—in hope, because it itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the sons of God.”<sup>1</sup> This creature is the spirit of life which created all things with earthly bodies, subject to the hope that it might be freed from the corruption of death into the freedom of the sons of glory, which was made subject to slavery on that day on which the world was created, which Christ saved when He came to free it through His Passion, that it might be revealed that when the creature had been subjected to slavery that day of sorrow would be turned into a day of joy. Since the sacrifice of this lamb was so great that even the shadow of its truth was sufficient for salvation in freeing the Jews from the slavery of Pharaoh, as though already the liberation of the creature from the slavery of corruption was prefigured, the image of Christ’s coming Passion worked for the advent of salvation, and, therefore, it was declared by God that, in the first month of the year on the fourteenth day of the moon, a year-old lamb without blemish should be sacrificed with whose blood they were to make signs upon the doorposts of their houses,<sup>2</sup> lest they be frightened by the angel of destruction, and that on that very night when the lamb was eaten in their homes, which was the celebration of the Passover, they should receive liberation through the figure of slavery. It is not difficult to interpret the spotless lamb of Christ<sup>3</sup> and His sacrifice made to free the slavery of our death. For, marked by the sign of His cross as by the sprinkling of blood, we shall be saved from the angels of destruction even to the consummation of the world. It should be sufficient to have written this brief, concise preface in order that, as we have proposed, without troubling to discuss further, we may commence on the method of calculating Easter, the month and the moon and the day.

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1 Cf. Rom. 8.20, 21.

2 Cf. Exod. 12.3-11.

3 Cf. 1 Cor. 5.7.

*Chapter 3*

Inquiry has been made by our elders, according to what has been written, as to what is the first month and what is the first day and on which day the fourteenth moon occurred when it was commanded to celebrate the Passover. For, at the time when this tradition arose among the Jews, the meaning of the names of the month was not reckoned by the course of the moon. When they finally calculated this time and day of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection, this gave them the method of knowing what was the first month of the year and what the first day of this month and when they should reckon that the fourteenth moon had occurred and why they should observe the mystery of Easter in accordance with the moon and day. This they considered of first importance, that when as the years progressed the time did not agree with the moon and the day (Sunday), it was better to extend the time than not to observe the moon and the day: first of all, because two things were more justly kept unchanged; then, because these two seemed more important in the observance. Let us now explain how they determined each of these points.

*Chapter 4*

Let us define accordingly what is the first month in the months of the year, then what is its first day. We say that our elders took their proof from the time of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. For the Lord is reported to have arisen on Sunday, March 25, and on the fifth day of the week preceding, which was March 22, to have eaten the Passover with His disciples. They reckoned this time in this way because the creature which He was freeing in His blood had been subjected to slavery at the same time. We must, therefore, prove that the beginning of the world occurred at this time.

*Chapter 5*

Genesis teaches that the world began in the spring season. For as soon as the dry land, which God called Earth, appeared, it was said: "Let the earth bring forth every herb and every fodder and every green tree, which may bear seed after its kind."<sup>1</sup> In spring, we see everything germinate, and so we do not doubt that the beginning of the world occurred then. But since the spring season has three months, it is the middle of these three months which gave the world its beginning, and not only the middle month, but the middle days of the months. From February 9 (the beginning of Spring) to March 11 is one month; from March 11 to March 25, there are fifteen days, that is, half a month. So one and one-half months precede the day and one and one-half months follow. Now, on March 25 the day and the night are equal, as Genesis tells us that it was at the beginning of the world: "God separated the light from the darkness. And he called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night."<sup>2</sup> Now every division has equality. Therefore, where we find equality of day and night, there we understand the world was begun. But not without cause did our elders subtract three days from March 25 to find the first day of the world. Our elders considered March 22 the first month and first day of the world because three days had passed before the sun was set in control of the world. Genesis reports that the lights of the sun and moon were created on the fourth day.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we find that Christ rose on March 25, but began the Passover with His disciples on March 22, on which day the creature had first been subjected to that slavery which He had come to release through His Passion.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gen. 1.11.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1.4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gen. 1.16, 19.

*Chapter 6*

Now it cannot be doubted that the first day of the world was Sunday, for Scripture says: "The world was made in six days, and on the seventh day God rested,"<sup>1</sup> which seventh day He called the Sabbath, from which it is clear that the first day of the world was Sunday, and we know that the moon was created full because it was made at the beginning of night and its reign. This situation, as computation reveals, cannot be repeated every year, so that, for example, March 22 and the fourteenth day of the moon should fall on Sunday. In the following year, March 25 is found to be the twenty-fifth day of the moon and the second day of the week. So when two things, both the moon and the day, are found to be changed, it seemed right to observe March 22 as the birthday of the world.

*Chapter 7*

Consequently, our elders decided that one full month must be observed for the birthday of the world and that Easter should be observed in whatever part of it both the day and the moon coincided, nor was this without scriptural authority, for Moses said: "This month shall stand at the head of your calendar, the first month of the year."<sup>1</sup> With these words he consecrated a whole month for the day of the world's birth. Thus our elders, who had found that March 22 was the birthday of the world, defined April 21 as a limit in determining the first month. So it will be permitted to celebrate Easter neither before March 22 nor after April 21; but when during this month both the moon and the day coincide, that is the four-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gen. 2.2, 3.

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<sup>1</sup> Exod. 12.2.



teenth day of the moon and Sunday, then Easter is to be celebrated. Now again, since the fourteenth day of the moon frequently does not fall on Sunday, they preferred to have the moon extended for seven days, provided they kept Sunday in the joy of the Resurrection. So when the day falls thus, we always postpone Easter as far as the twenty-first day of the moon for the sake of Sunday, so that Easter is celebrated neither before March 22 nor after April 21. In this way it is found that the month and the day and the moon are retained in the observance of Easter.

### *Chapter 8*

It is wise that we refer to the moon and day rather than to March 22 for the birthday of the world, for the full moon illumines all the darkness of night and Sunday is the resurrection of the days of the week, for it returns to the beginning and renews the end of the days. Preferably, the foregoing dates should be observed for the joyful celebration of the birthday and of the liberation of the creature, especially when they are kept within the bounds of the first month. Again, our elders gave greater religious importance to the day than to the moon, for we pass by the fourteenth moon, but we never pass by the day of the week, since all our salvation is in the Resurrection of that day. The Lord's day possesses both the beginning of days and the Resurrection, since on it the Lord arose. But the moon, even though it does not fill the whole night up to the twenty-first day, still illumines the greater part of the night, leaving the darkness behind it and conquering the darkness which is before it. Wherefore our elders preferred to have it extended to the twenty-first day, rather than to have Easter celebrated before the fourteenth day, because it is better to leave the darkness behind one's back than not to conquer the darkness that is before.

*Chapter 9*

So with this sum and this conclusion, it was reckoned by our elders that Easter could not be celebrated before March 22 nor after April 21. How they made this reckoning, as well as it lay in our poor power, we have explained through the grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.



*PASCHASIUS OF  
DUMIUM*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF THE  
GREEK FATHERS



## INTRODUCTION

Few men in the Middle Ages succeeded as well as Paschasius of Dumium in leaving but a single mention of their name to posterity, yet at the same time one that gives a wholly favorable impression of their character and scholarly interests. This Paschasius translated from Greek into Latin an extensive collection of material concerning the Desert Fathers of Egypt, as already indicated under discussion of the earliest work of St. Martin of Braga, which was taken from the same source.<sup>1</sup> The translation reveals the author only occasionally where we are able to compare his Latin with such Greek texts as have survived. In general, he is straightforward, simple in language, using many Greek or non-literary idioms.<sup>2</sup> The translator made himself known in the one-page preface, a dedication to St. Martin, from whom he had learned his Greek.

In the dedication, Martin is called *presbyter* and Abbot of Dumium, where Paschasius was a simple monk. Since Martin became a bishop in 556, the translation must have been completed before that, but as Martin did not perhaps arrive from the East before 550, and it would have taken Paschasius a little time to learn Greek from Martin and a great deal of time to translate such an extensive collection, we happen to be able to date this translation in 555 or very shortly before that year. Paschasius is sometimes referred to as a deacon, but that is based on no manuscript evidence, and appears to be a credit given to him because his name was confused with the better known Paschasius Radbertus.

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<sup>1</sup> P. 6.

<sup>2</sup> The syntax and vocabulary of Paschasius and other translators of the same texts were studied by A. H. Saloniuss, *Vitae Patrum* (Lund 1920).

Time has been somewhat unkind in depriving this monk of a large portion of his work. At least, it is my conviction that the collection now printed under his name represents but a small part, probably less than one-fifth, of his original translation, which was in two very long books. There are in existence two versions of his translation, a long one which is more common in the manuscripts, but which has never been published, and a short one which happened to be contained in the chief manuscript employed for the edition of Rosweyde. A detailed study of the exact relation of the two versions has never been made.<sup>3</sup> Rosweyde's edition was reprinted in PL 73.1025-1062, from which the present translation has been made,<sup>4</sup> though I have frequently referred, when the text was unclear, to other Latin versions of the same material or to manuscript photographs in my possession. The selections from the original here included are of sufficient length to give an excellent idea of their content and of the subject matter in which St. Martin aroused the interests of those in his charge; yet, at the same time, this form is short enough to be included in full in the present volume.

Only three paragraphs from Paschasius were included by Helen Waddell in her book.<sup>5</sup> As early as the thirteenth century some of the episodes had been incorporated into Anglo-Norman compositions,<sup>6</sup> but no translation exists into any language. Miss Waddell's fitting description of the translator is as follows: "The translation . . . came accompanied with a prefatory letter that has no match among epistles dedicatory till one comes to Ben Jonson. There is no other source of information about Paschasius beyond these dozen lines: but in these he

<sup>3</sup> *Martini Bracarensis episcopi opera omnia*, ed. C. W. Barlow, 12-28.

<sup>4</sup> Except for the preface, which is printed in Barlow, *op. cit.*, App. 3, and the title taken from manuscripts of the longer form and from Siebert of Gembloux, *On Illustrious Writers of the Church* 118.

<sup>5</sup> *The Desert Fathers* 215-217.

<sup>6</sup> *Henri d'Arci's Vitas Patrum: A Thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman Rimed Translation of the Verba Seniorum*, ed. Basilides Andrew O'Connor, F.S.C. (Washington 1949).

has contrived to fix his image, and the image of his type, vain and crabbed and obstinate, but an honest scholar.”<sup>7</sup>

For bibliography refer to works listed under Martin of Braga.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.* 205.

<sup>8</sup> Above, p. 16.





## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF THE GREEK FATHERS

*(Interrogationes et responsiones Graecorum patrum)*

Paschasius to my venerable lord and father Martin, priest and abbot.

When you asked me, most holy father, to translate into the Latin language the *Lives of the Greek Fathers*, which are carefully and eloquently composed, like many other works of the Greeks, I should have refused this unaccustomed task, if I had been allowed. I have never yet fashioned anything to be either written or read, being prohibited by my lack of ability and self-conviction. Lest I should be stealing an expression from the very wise Socrates, I dare not say that I know that I know nothing. Since I must accede to your request, I shall not mention my ability, but rather shall display even in an assigned work the confidence which I owe to you. But since there are many books of these eloquent men written in the Latin language, with the reading of which I have been admittedly acquainted under your instructions, if you happen to find anything inserted here from those sources or anything not eloquently expressed, please do not consider it my fault, because I have translated those writings exactly as they were in the manuscript that was given to me, although I admit that I am not able to do even that correctly. Hence, it remains for me to finish through your prayers what I have begun by your request. If you decide that it should be published, you must consent to improve it with your own words, for I shall not be satisfied that you liked any of it until I know that you disliked some of it.

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### *Chapter 1*

(1) A certain brother asked Abbot Sisoius how he should spend the time in his own cell; to whom Abbot Sisoius replied: "Eat your bread and salt, and let there be no need of cooking anything or of traveling abroad." To another who asked the same question he replied: "Daniel the prophet said: 'I ate not savory food.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 10.3.

(2) One old man said to another who was charitable and received many monks and laymen: "The lamp itself shines for many, but it illumines one's own face."

(3) One of the fathers said: "One man is found who eats much, but is still hungry because he restrains himself; another eats little and is satisfied. He who eats much, but restrains himself while he is still hungry, has a greater reward than the one who eats little and is satisfied."

(4) The old man said: "Never eat what you long for, but eat what has been provided for you by the Lord, and be thankful."

(5) A certain brother was attacked by the spirit of blasphemy, yet was ashamed to tell anyone; whenever he approached great elders, he would go up to them to make confession, then would be ashamed to speak. After he had frequently come to Abbot Pimenius, the old man saw that he was troubled by his thoughts and said: "See how often you come to me with your thoughts, but you again depart sadly, taking them with you. Tell me, my son, what is troubling you?" He replied: "The devil attacks me in the form of blasphemy, yet I am ashamed to tell anyone." As soon as he had revealed the cause, his attack seemed less severe, and the old man said: "Do not be sad, my son, but when this thought comes say: 'I have no worry for this matter; your blasphemy be on your own head, Satan.' For the soul does not desire the trouble, and any trouble which the soul does not wish will not long persist." And so the brother departed.

(6) Abbot Moses said: "The passion of self-pollution is caused by these four things: by too much food and drink, by more than sufficient sleep, by leisure and play, and by walking about in ornate clothes."

(7) He also said: "There are many passions of the body." And a brother said to him: "What are they, father?" He replied: "The Apostle Paul said: 'Fornication and uncleanness or every covetousness, let it not even be named among you,

as becomes saints.<sup>2</sup> Laughter<sup>3</sup> also and money-lending frequently lead to quarrels."

(8) Abbot Macarius related that, while he was living in that solitary place where he remained alone (there was another solitary place lower down which was full of many brothers), he looked out on the road one evening and saw a demon coming in the likeness of a man, dressed in a linen tunic full of holes; through each hole hung a little vase; and the old man said to him: "Where are you going, evil one?" He replied: "I am going to offer some advice to the brothers who are below." The old man said: "Why are you carrying so many little vases with you?" He said: "I am carrying something tasty for the brothers; the reason why I am carrying so many is that if one does not please, I shall offer another; and if that does not please, I shall display a third, and it is impossible that some one of these will not please them." With these words he departed. The old man remained in the same place, watching the road until the demon should return and he could find out what happened. When he returned, he said to him: "I hope you are well." He replied: "What is that word to me, for they all opposed me and no one listened to my advice?" The old man said to him: "Haven't you any friend there?" He replied: "I have one friend; he is on my side; whenever he sees me anywhere he comes to me as quick as the wind." When he asked the name he replied: "He is called Theoctistus." Then he quickly disappeared. And Abbot Macarius immediately arose and went down to the lower desert. When the brothers saw him coming from afar, they went out to meet him, and each one prepared his own place, hoping the old man would stay with him. But he inquired for the cell of Theoctistus and went to him. After a very joyful welcome, when both were alone together, Macarius said to him: "How is it with you, brother?" He replied: "It is all right as long as

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eph. 5.3.

<sup>3</sup> Reading *risus* for *visus*.

you are praying for me." The old man said: "Don't your thoughts trouble you?" He replied: "I am fine at present," for he was ashamed to speak. And the old man said: "You see how many years I have been in a solitary place and how much honor I have from everyone; yet, in spite of my advanced age, my thoughts trouble me." Theoctistus replied and said: "Believe me, father, so do mine." Then the old man made up various thoughts, pretending to be attacked by them, until Theoctistus confessed everything to him. Next, the old man said: "How do you fast?" He replied: "Until the ninth hour." The old man said: "Fast until evening, and ever and unceasingly meditate on something from the Gospel or from other Sacred Scriptures: and when some thought comes to you, never let the eyes of your heart look down, but raise them up, and soon the Lord will aid you." And so he departed to his solitary place. While he was in prayer, he looked out on the road and saw the same demon coming again and asked him: "Where are you going?" He answered him the same as before: "To offer the brothers some advice." As he was returning, the old man asked him: "How are the brothers now?" He replied: "It is terrible, for they have all become savages,<sup>4</sup> and what is worse, the one whom I did have as an obedient friend has been converted by someone or other and is now more savage than the rest; I have sworn that it will be a long time before I set foot in that place again." With these words he departed.

(9) A certain brother asked Abbot Pimenius about his thoughts. The old man replied: "If a monk holds in check<sup>5</sup> his belly, his riotous living, and his tongue, and does not wander about, I am confident that he will not die, but will live forever."

(10) Two brothers came to Abbot Elias because they were

<sup>4</sup> Paschasius has *agrestes* where other Latin translations have *sancti*, which seems more probable. The difference can be explained by supposing the variants *hagioi* and *agrioi* in the Greek text.

<sup>5</sup> Reading *tenuerit* for *renuerit*.

attacked by wicked thoughts. The old man, seeing that they were fat, smiled as if at his disciple and said: "Brother, I really am ashamed of you for having nourished and fattened your body so well, for we are all food for worms, even though you do claim to be a monk. Pallor and thinness combined with humility are becoming to a monk." He also said: "A monk who eats much and does much work should not have confidence, but he who eats little, even though he works little, may have confidence that he is acting like a man."

## *Chapter 2*

(1) A certain young man wanted to renounce the world, but frequently, as he was leaving his house, he was involved in his mind in many business transactions, for he was extremely rich. One day as he went out, he was surrounded by a band of demons who threw up much dust in front of him, whereupon he immediately stripped himself and cast aside his clothes and ran to the monastery naked. Now God revealed it to one old man, saying: "Arise and receive my athlete." The old man arose and met him naked and, learning the reason, marveled and gave him a monk's habit. Whenever people would come to ask the old man about idle thoughts, he would instruct them in renunciation of the world and would say: "Seek out the brother who did not even save a covering for his body, for I have never yet met the measure of his renunciation."

(2) Abbot Paul the Galatian used to say: "If a monk wishes to hear anything in his cell except those things which he cannot live without, he frequently thinks of leaving his cell and so is deceived by demons and caused to transgress." This same Paul during one Lent got through the whole season on a pound of beans and a small jar of water. He made a small mat, and would weave and unweave it, so that he would not have to go outside.



(3) A certain brother asked an old man: "Father, be kind enough to tell me what I should collect in my youth in order to have it in my old age?" The old man answered: "Either win Christ and take thought about yourself, or else win money so that you need not beg. Thus you must choose between the Lord God and Mammon."

(4) Frequently Abbot Agatho warned his disciple: "Never acquire anything that you would be ashamed of possessing if a brother asked you for it, lest in this you transgress the command of God: 'Give to him who asks, and from him who desires to borrow, turn not aside.'"<sup>1</sup>

### Chapter 3

(1) While Abbot Macarius was in Egypt and had gone away from his cell, he returned and found a robber stealing what he had in his cell. He stood as though he were a stranger and helped load the animal with the goods, then very calmly guided him, saying: "We brought nothing into this world.<sup>1</sup> The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

(2) A certain brother lived near one of the older men and used to enter his cell secretly and steal whatever the old man had. When the old man discovered this, he did not accuse him, but worked all the harder, saying: "I think that brother is in need." Now, the old man used to suffer a great deal for want of bread. When he was dying, the other brothers surrounded him. As he saw the brother who used to steal from him, he said: "Come here to me, brother." And he seized his hands and kissed them, saying: "I give thanks to the hands of this brother that because of them<sup>3</sup> I believe I shall go to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luke 6.30.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. 6.7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Job 1.21.

<sup>3</sup> Reading *eas* for *eum*.

the kingdom of heaven." And the brother felt compassion and was penitent and became himself a zealous monk, as a result of the deeds of the old man<sup>4</sup> which he beheld.

#### *Chapter 4*

(1) One of the old men used to say: "We have found nothing written about any virtuous acts of the poor man Lazarus, except that he never murmured against the rich man, although the latter never showed him any pity; rather he bore the labor of his poverty gratefully, and for that reason was received into the bosom of Abraham."<sup>1</sup>

(2) He also said: "One must think of nothing except the fear of God. For even though one be compelled to be anxious for the needs of his body, one should never think of that ahead of time."

#### *Chapter 5*

(1) When Abbot Silvanus had gone away from his cell for a little while, his disciple Zacharia and the other brothers removed the garden fence and made the garden larger. After he returned, he discovered this; so he picked up his goatskin and prepared to leave, but they threw themselves at his feet and asked him to say why he was doing this. Then the old man said: "I do not enter this cell unless the fence has been restored to its place." This was done immediately, and he returned.

(2) A certain brother asked an old man: "If a brother owes me a small sum, would you suggest that I ask him for it?" To whom the old man said: "Tell him once only with

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<sup>4</sup> Reading *senis* for *suis*.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luke 16.19-25.

humility." But he said: "What if I tell him once and he does not pay me, what shall I do?" Then the old man said: "Say nothing more to him." Again he said: "And what shall I do if I am unable to conquer my thoughts without being insistent with him?" The old man said to him: "Dismiss your thoughts; only do not sadden your brother, for you are a monk."

(3) Abbot Agatho was quite careless with people who wanted to buy his handiwork: now, the price of sieves was 100 *nummi* and of baskets 250; he would tell the price to purchasers, but would take whatever they offered him without counting it. For he would say: "What good does it do me to quarrel with them and perhaps make them perjure themselves in addition to their misdeed? Since I have enough money, shall I demand it of the brothers? Since God does not want such alms from me, neither does He desire me to permit anyone else to sin in offering their sacrifice." When the brother said: "Where are you going to get bread for your cell?" he replied: "What is the bread of man in a cell?"

### *Chapter 6*

(1) One of the holy fathers said: "Anger arises through these four actions: from greed and avarice in giving and receiving and in stealing the property of others, from too eager defense of one's own opinion, from desire to be worthy of honors, from desire to be a learned man, wiser than all people. Anger also obscures human feelings in these four ways: if a man hates his neighbor, or if he values him at naught, or if he envies him, or if he spreads rumors about him. For this I shall use John the Evangelist as my witness; he said: 'He who hates his brother is in the darkness and he does not know whither he goes, and he remains in death.'<sup>1</sup> There are four

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 John 2.11.

methods of action to be taken against this passion: first, from the heart; second, from the face; third, from the tongue; fourth, from the action. If anyone is able to endure ill and not let it enter his heart, it will not reach his face. If it reaches his face, he must guard his tongue and not speak it. If he speaks it, he must guard against putting it into action, then it will quickly fall from his heart. Men are on three levels as regards the passion of anger. He who of his own will refrains from harming those who injure or resist him<sup>2</sup> and spares his neighbor; he is of the nature of Christ. He who does not harm another nor wish to be harmed himself; he is of the nature of Adam. He who harms or injures others or heaps insults on them or demands interest; he is of the nature of the devil."

(2) Some brothers went to Abbot Antony and asked to hear from him words by which they might be saved. He said to them: "You have heard the Scriptures, and you know what is sufficient to you from Christ." But they insisted that he agree to tell them something. Then he said to them: "The Gospel says: 'If someone strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.'"<sup>3</sup> But they said they could not do this. The old man answered: "You cannot offer the other cheek? Then let him strike the same one again if he wants." But when they insisted they could not even do this, the old man said to them: "If you cannot do this, then do not return evil for what you have received." When they repeated the same words as before, Abbot Antony said to his disciple: "Go and prepare some food for them to eat, for you see that they are terribly weak." And he said to them: "If you cannot do this and do not want to do the other, what do you expect from me? As I see it, you need prayer to cure your infirmity."

<sup>2</sup> Reading *voluntarie a nocentibus aut resistentibus iniuriatur*.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 5.39.

*Chapter 7*

(1) One of the brothers was wronged by another and went to Abbot Sisoius and explained the nature of the insult, adding: "I want to avenge myself." The old man asked him to leave vengeance to God, but he repeated: "I shall not desist until I really get revenge." Abbot Sisoius said to him: "Since you have put this thought in your mind, at least let us pray." And the old man arose and began to pray in these words: "O God, we no longer have need that Thou be anxious for us, since we ourselves, as this brother says, will and can be avenged." When the brother heard this, he prostrated himself at the feet of the old man and prayed for forgiveness, promising that he would never again quarrel with him against whom he was angry.

(2) One brother was wronged by another and went and told an old man. The old man replied: "Let your thoughts be satisfied, for your brother does not want you to be wronged, but your sins compel him. In every temptation that comes to you from a man,<sup>1</sup> do not find fault with him, but merely say: 'Because of my sins these things happen to me.'"

(3) Abbot Pimenius used to say frequently: "Ill will never overcomes ill will. If anyone does ill to you, return good to him, that by your goodness you may conquer his ill will."

(4) There was a certain brother who, the more anyone wronged him or stirred him up, the more he would run back to him saying: "These are the ones who offer us a chance to perfect ourselves, but 'they that call us blessed, the same deceive us, and destroy the way of our steps.'"<sup>2</sup>

(5) There was another old man who, if someone criticized him, would if he was close by go and reward him in person, or if he was further away would send him presents.

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<sup>1</sup> Reading *per hominem* for *per omnia*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa. 3.12.

### *Chapter 8*

(1) A certain brother asked Abbot Sisoïus: "If robbers or barbarians should attack me and try to kill me, but I should get the better of them, would you tell me to kill them?" He answered: "Don't do it; don't even mention homicide, but trust everything to God; if anything adverse happens to you, admit that it comes to you because of your sins; if anything good occurs, you should ascribe it all to God's dispensation."

(2) There was a great hermit called Athabeos who lived in the mountain, and robbers came upon him; he raised a loud cry and other brothers hastened from the surroundings and seized the robbers. They were passed on to the city, where the judge put them in prison. Now the brothers were extremely sad that the robbers had been punished on their account, and they went to Abbot Pimenius and told him what had happened. He wrote to the hermit, saying: "Remember the first betrayal and its source and then you will see the second betrayal. For unless you had been betrayed from within yourself, you never would have perpetrated this second betrayal." When he heard these words, he had compassion, and although he was well known in that region for being one who had not left his cell for a long time, he arose and went to the city and removed the robbers from prison and publicly set them free.

### *Chapter 9*

(1) Someone seeing a man laboriously carrying a dead man on a couch said to him: "Do you carry the dead? If you would improve, carry the living, 'for the peacemakers shall be called children of God.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. 5.9.

(2) When some of the brothers asked Abbot Moses for a talk, he urged his disciple Zacharia to say something to them. The latter placed his cloak under his feet and trod upon it and said: "Unless one has been thus trod upon, one cannot become a monk."

(3) The blessed Antony prophesied much to Abbot Ammon, saying: "You have far to advance in the fear of God." And he took him out of the cell and showed him a stone and said to him: "Go and do harm to that stone and beat it mercilessly." When he had done this, St. Antony asked him whether the stone had answered him back. He replied: "No." Abbot Antony said to him: "You too will arrive at this same measure, that you think no harm is being done to you."

### *Chapter 10*

(1) Abbot Motois built himself a monastery in a place called Heracleon. Being troubled by many things, he moved to another place and similarly built himself another monastery there. But through the devil's envy there was one brother who was always angry with him; for this reason, he arose and returned to his own village and made a monastery there and shut himself up inside. After some time the brothers from the place which he had left gathered, and took with them the brother with whom he had quarreled, to ask him to return to his monastery. When they had come to the vicinity, they left their goatskins and the brother in one place and went on to the old man. When they knocked on the door, he opened the window and looked out and recognized them. After a prayer, Abbot Motois said to them: "Where are your goatskins?" They answered: "Over there nearby with the brother who was angry with you." When the old man heard this and recognized the name and knew that he had come, he was so delighted that he took an axe and chopped down the door by which he had

shut himself up; he went out and ran to the place where the brother was, and was the first to ask forgiveness; he embraced him and brought him into his cell and feasted with them for three days, though it never had been his custom to break his fast; and he arose and returned with them.

(2) A brother asked Abbot Elias: "If I make anyone sad, how shall I ask his pardon?" The old man answered: "From the bottom of your heart and in sadness do penance before him, and God will see your purpose and satisfy him."

### *Chapter 11*

(1) Abbot Arsenius said: "If an unbaked brick is placed in a foundation close to a river, it will not stand up even one day; but if it is well baked, it will remain like stone. Just so a man who is not baked and inflamed (as it was said of Joseph: 'The word of the Lord inflamed him'<sup>1</sup>), such a man is soon dissolved at the start of thoughts of the flesh."

(2) The same was asked by another brother: "If I sin, even the smallest sin, and my thought consumes me and accuses me, saying: 'Why do you sin?', what must I do?" The old man answered: "In whatever hour man falls into sin and says from his heart: 'Lord God, I have sinned; forgive me,' the destructive force of his thought or despair will soon cease."

(3) Abbot Pimenius used to say of Abbot Isidore that only he understood himself. For when his thought would say to him: "You are great," he would answer himself: "As great as Antony, or even Abbot Piamon, or the rest of the brothers who pleased God?" Whenever he had these thoughts, he would be at ease. When the devil, to torment him, threatened despair and punishment, saying: "After all of this you are

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 104.19 (Douay). The King James Version (105.19): "The word of the Lord tried him."



going to go to tortures," he answered: "Although I may be sent to tortures, still I shall find you beneath me."

(4) Wicked spirits often appeared to Abbot Moses, saying: "You have conquered us and we can do nothing to you; for whenever we wish to humble you with despair, you are exalted; and when you exalt yourself, you are so humble that none of us can approach you."

(5) When a certain brother frequently used these words to Abbot Sisoïus: "What shall I do, father, for I have fallen?," he answered: "Arise." And he arose. And again, he claimed that he had fallen. The old man said: "Arise again." When the brother kept saying frequently that he had fallen, the old man would use the same words, exclaiming: "Don't stop getting up, son." The brother asked him: "Father, explain how far I can arise." The old man said: "The extent of your fall depends on whether you are found in good works or in bad. For in whatever work a man is found, so he shall be judged."

(6) He also said: "He who labors and thinks he is accomplishing something already has his reward."

### *Chapter 12*

(1) A certain brother asked Abbot Pimenius if it were better to live with the other brothers or apart from them. The old man replied: "If a man reproaches himself, he can exist anywhere; but if he exalts himself, he stands nowhere, as it is written: 'If anyone thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself.'<sup>1</sup> For whatever a man does for another, he should not exult over it, as he will soon lose it."

(2) If anyone wished to listen to Abbot Macarius in fear as of a holy man, he would be suspected and receive no reply

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 6.3.

at all from the old man. On the other hand, if anyone appeared to hate him and attacked him thus: "Abbot Macarius, when you were a camel driver and used to steal nitre, didn't you get beaten by your masters when you were caught stealing?", he would gladly and joyfully respond to whatever was asked of him.

(3) While Abbot Nesteron was walking with other brothers in the desert, they saw a serpent and ran away. One of them said to him: "Are you afraid too, father?" The old man replied: "I am not afraid, son, but I had to run away, for otherwise I should not have escaped vainglorious thoughts."

(4) On one occasion, a brother from Egypt came to Abbot Zeno in Syria and began to criticize his own thoughts in the presence of the old man, who, when he heard, remarked in surprise: "The Egyptians conceal the virtues which they have and make public the vices which they do not have, while the Syrians and Greeks boast of the virtues which they do not have and hide the vices which they do have."

(5) One old man went to another old man and said: "I am dead to this world." The other remarked: "Do not boast, for even though you may say: 'I am dead,' the devil still is not dead and he has countless wicked arts."

(6) When Abbot Sisoius was sitting in the presence of another brother, he became carried away with his thoughts and, without realizing it, sighed in the other's hearing. He began to be sorry and said: "Forgive me, brother, please; I no longer remember that I am a monk when I sigh in another's hearing." Whenever this same old man stood in prayer, he lifted his hands toward heaven, then quickly lowered them if another was present, lest this be imputed to him for praise.

(7) An old man lived in the lower regions of Egypt and sat quietly. One pious layman served his needs. Now, it happened that the son of the layman fell ill. With many entreaties, he begged the old man to go to his house and offer prayer for the child. The old man arose and walked with him, but the

layman ran ahead and entered his house and said: "Come to meet the anchorite." When the old man saw them coming from a distance with torches, he realized that they were coming to him, and he immediately took off his clothes and threw them into a river and started to wash them, standing naked. The one who ministered to him was ashamed of the sight and said to the men: "Let us return, for our old man has lost his senses." And he went to him and said: "Father, what is this that you have done? All who have seen you said: 'The old man is possessed by a demon.' " He replied: "That is what I wanted to hear."

(8) Again, on another occasion, one of the judges wanted to see Simon, and clerics went ahead and told him: "Get ready, father, for a judge who has heard of your works is coming to you, hoping to receive a benediction from you." He replied: "I shall do it; I shall get ready." So he put on his sleeveless shirt and took bread and cheese in his hands and went to the door and sat down with his legs spread out and started to eat. When the judge arrived with his officials and saw him, he said: "Is this the anchorite about whom we have heard such things?" And he had no regard for him and departed.

### *Chapter 13*

(1) An old man said: "He who is too much praised by men suffers no small harm, but he who is not honored by men receives glory from above."

(2) He also said: "It is not possible for grass and seed to come into existence at the same time; similarly, it is impossible for those of us who have praise and glory in secular things to win a reward in heaven."

(3) He also said: "When thoughts of pride or vainglory assail you, examine yourself to see whether you have obeyed all the commands of God, whether you love your enemies,

whether you rejoice in the success of an enemy, whether you feel sad at his humiliation, whether you remember that you are an unworthy servant,<sup>1</sup> that you are a worse sinner than other men; even then do not suppose that you have accomplished something great, that you have done some good deed, for such elated thoughts dissolve all those good things."

(4) An old man said to someone: "Do not set your heart against your brother, saying that you are more sober than he and more continent, but be subjected to the grace of God in the spirit of poverty and in love that is not pretended, lest in the spirit of exaltation you lose your reward."

(5) The old man also said: "To the extent that a man lowers himself in humility, so far does he climb on high. Just as pride, if it climbs to heaven, is cast down to hell, so humility, if it descends to hell, will then be exalted to heaven."

(6) As Abbot Macarius was returning to his cell at dawn carrying palm leaves, the devil met him with a very sharp sickle and tried to strike him, but was unable to do so. He shouted: "I have great trouble with you, Macarius, for when I want to strike you I am unable. Yet I surpass you in everything that you do. You fast occasionally; I never eat food. You watch frequently; I never allow myself to sleep. Yet in one thing you conquer me, I admit." When Abbot Macarius inquired what that thing was, he replied: "Your humility alone overcomes me." As his enemy said these words, the blessed Macarius extended his hands in prayer, and the unclean spirit vanished into the air.

(7) One of the fathers used to say: "All labor without humility is useless, for humility is the precursor of love. Just as John was the precursor of Jesus, bringing all men to Him,<sup>2</sup> so humility brings all to love, that is, to God Himself, 'for God is love.'"<sup>3</sup>

1 Cf. Rom. 3.12.

2 Cf. John 1.40.

3 Cf. 1 John 4.8.

(8) One brother asked an old man: "What is humility?" The old man replied: "It is the tree of life, growing up high."

(9) He also said: "The land in which God ordered a sacrifice to be made to Him is humility."

(10) Again, one old man was asked: "How can the soul attain humility?" He replied: "If a man considers only his own sins." He used to say: "The perfection of man is humility."

(11) Abbot Motois said: "Humility is never angry with itself and never allows others to be angry."

(12) He also said: "Humility is when, if a brother has sinned against you, you forgive him before he repents."

### *Chapter 14*

(1) At the time when Abbot Joseph came with other brothers to Abbot Pimenius, one of the relatives of this Pimenius brought a child whose face had been twisted by a seizure of the devil, and its father sat outside the monastery and wept. When one of the old men heard his voice as he wept and came outside and asked the cause of his mourning, he replied: "I am a relative of your Pimenius, and I have come that he might see this child. You see, master, what tribulation Satan has caused this infant. Until now, we were afraid to bring him here, because Pimenius does not want to see us, and if he knows that I am here now, he will throw me out in confusion. But when I saw you, fathers, who have recently come to him, I presumed to come here. However you wish, then, go and pity me, father, and take this child and carry it in with you, that he may pray for it." The old man took the child and went into the cell, but he was wise enough not to offer it first to Abbot Pimenius, but to the lesser brothers, saying: "Bless the child, brothers, offer a prayer, and pass it on to the other old men." After all of them, he brought it to Pimenius, but he was unwilling to look upon it. When they

asked him to pray as they all had done, he groaned, then arose and praying said: "God, heal thy creature, that the enemy may not rule over him." And he made the sign of the cross over the child and it was soon restored to its father, healed.

(2) Once, when a layman entered the church possessed by an unclean spirit, they all offered prayer, but the unclean spirit was by no means cast out of him. So the brothers said to one another: "What can we do to this spirit? No one can drive him out except Abbot Besarion, but if we mention this, he will not even consent to come to church. Let us do thus: since he is accustomed to come to church before everyone else, let us cause the one who is suffering to sit here, and then let us say: 'Father, father, arouse the one who is sleeping.'" Accordingly, they did so, and when Abbot Besarion came, they all stood in prayer and said to him: "Father, arouse the one who is sleeping." He said: "Arise and go outside." And soon the unclean spirit departed from him, and he was made whole from that hour.

### *Chapter 15*

(1) The blessed Antony used to say frequently: "If the baker did not cover the eyes of his animal at the mill, it would turn around and consume its own recompense. So we receive a veil through the dispensation of God, that we are unable to comprehend the good that we do, lest we consider ourselves blessed and thus become extolled and lose our reward. The reason for our being left with sordid thoughts is that we must concentrate on condemning ourselves and our thoughts; yet we must not allow the sordid things in us to obscure the small amount of good we have done. A man is never good, even if he wants to be good, unless God dwells in him, 'for no one is good but God only.'<sup>1</sup> We must therefore always truthfully

<sup>1</sup> Luke 18.19.

criticize ourselves. When one does not reprehend himself, he loses his reward."

(2) While the same holy Antony was praying in his cell, a voice came to him, saying: "Antony, you have not yet reached the measure of the tanner who lives in Alexandria." Upon hearing this, the old man arose early in the morning and took his stick and hastened to the city. When he came to the designated man and went in, the latter was astounded at the sight of such a great man. The old man said to him: "Recount to me your works, for it is on account of you that I have left the desert and come here." He answered and said: "I am not aware that I have ever accomplished any good thing. As soon as I arise from bed in the morning, before I sit down to my work, I say that this whole city from the least to the greatest is to enter the kingdom of God for its just acts, but that I alone for my sins shall enter eternal punishment. What I say in the morning, and again in the evening before I sleep, I feel in the truth of my heart." Hearing this, the blessed Antony replied: "In truth, son, like a good workman sitting in your own house, you have won the kingdom of God and its rest, while I, as one without understanding, have spent all my time in solitude without having attained to your measure."

(3) A brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "Father, why did the Apostle say: 'For the clean things are unclean'?"<sup>2</sup> He replied: "If anyone can arrive at an understanding of these words, he will see that he is less than every creature." The brother said: "How can I see myself as less than him who is a murderer?" The old man replied: "If a man is able to arrive at these words of the Apostle, and sees a man who has killed someone, he says to himself: 'This is the only crime he has committed, but I commit murder every hour by killing myself.'" When the brother asked how that was possible, the old man answered: "Man's only justice is to reprimand himself constantly; then he will be justified when he condemns his sins."

2 Cf. Titus 1.15.

(1) A certain brother said to an old man: "My thoughts say to me: 'I am good.'" The old man answered: "He who does not see his sins always thinks he is good; but he who sees his sins can never be persuaded by his thoughts that he is good, for he knows what he sees. Therefore, one needs to work hard to reflect upon himself, for negligence, sloth, and idleness cause the eyes of the mind to be blind."

(5) A certain brother said to Abbot Pimenius: "My thoughts do not allow me to have regard for my sins, but my fathers compel me to think of my sins." Abbot Pimenius replied with a story about Abbot Isidore, saying: "While Abbot Isidore was weeping in his cell and his disciple was sitting in another cell, it happened that the disciple went to him during the very hour that he was weeping and asked: 'Why are you weeping, father?' He replied: 'I am weeping for my sins, son.' Again, he said: 'You have no sins, father.' The old man replied: 'My son, if God were to manifest my sins to men, He would need not three nor four men, but many, many more.'"

### *Chapter 16*

(1) A brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "How can a man avoid speaking ill of his neighbor?" The old man replied: "My neighbor and I are two images. When I criticize my image, that of my brother is held in honor by me; but when I praise my own, then I behold the evil image of my brother. Accordingly, I do not say ill of another if I always criticize myself. For he who does not examine himself despises even the great man."

(2) One of the fathers used to say: "Whatever you dislike you should not do to another. If you dislike one who speaks ill of you, do not speak ill of another. If you dislike one who slanders you, do not slander another. If you dislike one who despises you or does you wrong or carries off what belongs to



you or does anything similar, do not do any of these things to another. He who is able to abide by these words does enough to achieve salvation."

(3) One of the holy fathers, seeing another in sin, wept bitterly, saying: "Woe is me, for just as he sins today, so shall I tomorrow." And he warned his disciple, saying: "Even though someone commits a grave sin in your presence, do not condemn him, but rather consider that you sin more than he does, even if he is a layman, unless, of course, he blasphemes God, which is a sign of heretics."

(4) A certain anchorite named Timotheus heard that one of the brothers had sinned. When his abbot asked what he should do with the brother, Timotheus advised that he have him expelled. When the brother had been expelled, temptation came over Timotheus, who prayed in the sight of the Lord and said: "I have sinned, have mercy upon me." A voice came to him, saying: "Timotheus, this has happened to you because you had no regard for your brother in the time of his temptation."

### *Chapter 17*

(1) A brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "What is faith?" The old man replied: "To live constantly in love and humility and to do good to one's neighbor."

(2) When Abbot Theodore was speaking of the work of the hands and of the soul, a brother said to him: "Explain to me, father, the work of the soul and the work of the hands." The old man said: "Everything that we do by the command of God should be credited to the works of the soul; what we do for our own use or advantage, all these are known as the works of the hands."

(3) If any one of the brothers sent for Abbot Apollo while he was working with his hands, he would swiftly and gladly

go to him, saying: "I am going with Christ my King to work for my soul. For this is the work which is credited to the soul."

### *Chapter 18*

(1) A certain anchorite sat outside his monastery, performing many deeds of virtue, and other monks came to him from the monastery and compelled him to eat at an unaccustomed hour. After this, the brothers said to him: "Were you sad, father, because today you did something against your custom?" He replied: "My troubles come when I follow my own will."

(2) A certain brother came to Scete and asked to see Abbot Arsenius. When the other brothers urged him to rest a while, he replied: "I shall not eat bread until I am worthy to see him." Then one of the brothers took him to Abbot Arsenius, knocked on the door of his cell, and brought him in. They were received, prayer was offered, they sat down. The blessed Arsenius being silent, the one who brought the brother in said: "I am going." And the one who had come with such great desire, seeing that Abbot Arsenius had not spoken to him, sat in silence and confusion and said: "And I am going with you, brother." So they both left. Then he asked to be taken to Abbot Moses, who had been converted from a robber. He was received by him with due hospitality and dismissed. The brother who had taken him to both of them said: "Well, you have seen both of those for whom you inquired; which one do you like better?" He replied: "Why, I preferred the one who received both of us well and fed us." Hearing these words, one of the fathers prayed to the Lord, saying: "Lord, explain this matter, I pray, for one refuses in Thy name to see men or speak to them, the other in Thy name is cordial to all." Lo, in a trance, he seemed to see two ships on a river: and in one he saw the Holy Spirit in silence and tranquillity sailing with Abbot Arsenius; in the other ship he saw Abbot Moses and

the angels of God, and they were placing honey in his mouth and a honeycomb in his teeth.

### *Chapter 19*

(1) A certain brother asked an old man: "If there are two brothers in one cell, and one of them fasts for six straight days, while the other tends the sick, whose labor is greater before God?" The old man replied: "If he who fasts six days shall hang himself by the nose, he will not be similar to the other in the sight of God."

(2) John the Younger, of Thebes, disciple of Abbot Ammon, served the old man in his infirmity for twelve years; yet, when the old man saw him working, never once did he say a kind or pleasant word to him. When Ammon was about to leave this world, the other old men sat about and he took the hand of his disciple and said to him three times: "You shall be saved, you shall be saved, you shall be saved." And he handed him to the old men, saying: "He is not a man, but an angel, who served me in my illness so many years and, although he never heard a kind word from me, still performed his service with great patience."<sup>1</sup>

### *Chapter 20*

(1) A certain great old man said to his ill disciple: "Be not saddened, son, for your infirmity or the misfortunes of your

<sup>1</sup> The extremely long section printed by Rosweyde as par. 3 is a quotation from chapter 26 of the *Lausiac History* by Palladius. This material is not found in any of the longer-form unpublished manuscripts of Paschasius, so far as I have discovered, nor in the pseudo-Rufinus version of Book III, nor in the Pelagius—John version of Books V and VI. It appears extraneous to the manuscripts which Paschasius possessed, and must have been added more recently because it was appropriate to the subject of chapter 19. Some of the other material which Rosweyde printed here comes from the *Life of Antony*.

body. For it is of the utmost importance to religion to thank God in one's infirmity. If you are iron, you lose the rust through fire; but if you are gold, you are tried by fire and proceed from great things to greater. Be not anxious, therefore, brother, for if God wants you to be tortured in the body, who are you that you should resist His will or bear it ill? Therefore, bear up and ask God to give you what He wills."

(2) A certain old man was frequently weak and languishing of body, but one year it happened that no illness befell him, wherefore he wept and took it badly, saying: "Thou hast abandoned me, Lord; Thou hast been unwilling to visit me this year."

### *Chapter 21*

(1) Abbot Piemon was asked by a brother how the soul can resist and not wish to fear God. The old man replied: "The soul does wish to fear God, but it is not yet time. For the fear of God is great perfection."

(2) A brother asked an old man: "How does the fear of God enter the soul?" And the old man said: "If anyone first possesses humility, so as to judge or condemn no one, or is a distributor of alms, so as to have nothing, then the fear of God enters his soul."

(3) An old man said: "May fear and humility and hunger remain with you."

(4) A certain brother asked an old man: "Father, why is my heart hard and why does it not fear God?" The old man said to him: "I think that if a man would keep reproach in his heart he would possess the fear of God." The brother said: "What is reproach?" The old man answered: "That a man reproaches his soul in all matters, saying to it: 'Remember that you must meet God.' He also says: 'What have I to do with man?' I think that if one abides by these reproaches, the fear of God will come to him."

*Chapter 22*

(1) A certain brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "What is repentance?" The old man answered: "The repentance of sinners is to sin no more. For a voice always shouts to man until his last breath: 'Be converted today, lest sudden death come over you like a thief.'"

(2) Abbot Pimenius said with a sigh: "All virtues have entered my cell except one virtue, and upon it man depends." The brothers asked him: "What is this virtue, father?" The old man answered: "That a man shall always reproach himself."

*Chapter 23*

(1) One of the fathers told a story of a certain bishop to whom it had been reported that two men in his congregation were of very impure character and adulterers. He, accordingly, asked God to reveal to him whether this was so. As each one came forward for communion after the consecration of the host, he would study their faces and their souls. The faces of sinners he saw as black as coal and their eyes filled with blood; the others he saw with bright faces and clothed in white garments. As they received the Body of the Lord, a light seemed to shine in the faces of some, but in others a flame. In order to learn about those who had been accused before him, he offered them communion, and he saw one of them with a bright honorable face, dressed in white garments, the other wearing black and with a terrible countenance. After they received the grace of the divine mystery, one seemed to be illumined with light, while the other was consumed with flame. Therefore, the bishop asked God to instruct him in each matter that had been revealed. Whereupon an angel of the Lord stood by him and said: "All that you have heard about them is true, but one still clings to his depravity and his de-

sire to sin and that is why you saw him with a black face and consumed with flame. The other also was similar to him, as you heard, but the reason why you saw his face illumined is that he recalled what he had done before and renounced his evil deeds and with tears and groans asked the mercy of God, promising that if his previous sins should be forgiven, he would never return to them. Therefore, his former sins are wiped out and he has achieved this grace which you have seen." As the bishop expressed wonder at the grace of God, that it not only set free of his torments a man of base life, but even honored him so greatly, the angel replied: "Well may you marvel, for you are a man. Our Lord and yours is by nature good and kind to those who cease from their sins and repent at confession, for He not only remits their torments, but even makes them worthy of honor. 'For God so loved men that he gave his only-begotten Son'<sup>1</sup> for sinners and appointed Him to death on their behalf. If He, therefore, though they were His enemies, chose to die for them, how much more shall He pity them when they are His own?'<sup>2</sup> This you should know, that no sins of men overcome the goodness of God, if only through repentance each one destroys the sins which he has previously committed. For God is merciful and knows the weakness of the human race and the strength of their passions and the ability and malice of the devil, and when men fall into sin, He is indulgent as if to sons and awaits their conversion; upon the penitent, as if upon those who languish, He has compassion and mercy: He soon dissolves their sins and even allows them the rewards of the just." Hearing this, the bishop marveled greatly and glorified God, revealing to all what had happened.

(2) Abbot Paul the Simple had this grace, that he could sit and watch those who entered church and tell from their faces the thoughts of each one, whether bad or good. Now,

<sup>1</sup> John 3.16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. 5.8, 9.

as they were going into church on one occasion, he saw them enter with bright faces and happy hearts and their guardian angels joyfully proceeding with them. But he saw one of them with a dark black body, and demons on this side and on that, dragging him their way by reins through his nostrils, and his holy angel following from afar in sadness. Therefore, the blessed Paul began to weep most bitterly and to pound his breast, sitting before the church, because of him whom he had seen in such condition. All the other men, seeing him weeping thus, began to ask him to make known whether he had seen anything in them, or else to enter the congregation with them. He, however, was unwilling to enter, but wept constantly for him whom he had seen thus. After a while, the congregation was dismissed and, as they departed, again he watched the faces of everyone, to see whether they came out as they had entered. And he beheld the one who was previously dark and black coming out with a bright face and shining body, the demons following him from afar, and his holy angel beside him, extremely happy and rejoicing exceedingly over him. Then, the blessed Paul arose and shouted with a loud voice and blessed the Lord, saying: "How great is the mercy and kindness of the Lord; how great is his pity!" And he climbed to a high place and said in a loud voice: "Come and see the works of the Lord; come and see how 'He wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'<sup>3</sup> Come, let us adore him, saying: 'Thou alone canst remit sins.' " When they had all gathered, Paul explained to them what he had seen before the man entered the church, and what after. He asked the brother whom he had seen thus, to explain to them his thoughts and deeds and tell why God had given him such redemption. He began to speak to them all, saying: "I am a sinner and for a long time I was always addicted to fornication; now, as I entered the church of God, I heard the words

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3 1 Tim. 2.4.

that the Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaia, saying: 'Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; learn to do good. Make justice your aim. Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall become white as snow. If you are willing, and obey me, you shall eat the good things of the land.'<sup>4</sup> I, a fornicator, was moved by these words of the prophet, and, groaning in my heart, I said to the Lord: 'Lord, Thou art he who came to save sinners;<sup>5</sup> therefore, what Thou hast promised through the prophet fulfill by Thy work in me, an unworthy sinner. For I promise Thee henceforth, and I promise with my whole heart, that I shall commit this sin no more, but I renounce all injustice and, from now on, I shall serve Thee with a clean conscience. From today, therefore, O Lord, and from this hour receive me, penitent, worshiping Thee and renouncing all sin. I resolve and swear to keep all your just ordinances.'<sup>6</sup> With this determination, I departed from the church, having decided never again to perpetrate any of my former sins." When they had all heard this, they shouted with one voice to the Lord, saying: "How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all."<sup>7</sup>

### *Chapter 24*

(1) A certain brother went to Abbot Pimenius and said that he was suffering great tribulation. The old man said to him: "Flee from that place as far as you can walk in three days and three nights, and spend one full year fasting until nightfall." He replied: "If I shall die before one year pass, what will become of me?" Abbot Pimenius said: "I trust in God that, if you depart from me with such intention, even if

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Isa. 1.16-19.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. 1.15.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 118.106.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. 103.24.



you shall die soon, your repentance will be received before God with good intention."

(2) A certain brother, outstanding for his deep humility, sat in his cell in Egypt; he had a sister in the city who was a harlot, who had brought ruin to many souls. Frequently the old men urged the brother, but with difficulty could they persuade him to go to her that his admonitions might aid her to overcome her sin. When he came to the place, someone who knew him saw him and went and told her, saying: "Lo, your brother comes to you." For joy, she left the lovers whom she was attending and ran to meet her brother with head uncovered. As she tried to embrace him, he said to her: "My dearest sister, spare your soul, since many are perishing on account of you. How will you be able to endure those terrible eternal torments?" In fright, she said to him: "Do you know, brother, that I may yet have salvation?" He replied: "If you wish it, there is salvation." She threw herself at the feet of her brother and begged him to take her with him into the desert. Her brother said: "Go, cover your head and follow me." She replied: "Let us go, for it is better for me to be disgraced by walking among men with bare head than to enter again the scene of my crime." As they were walking together, he advised her how to be penitent, then, seeing some people approach, he said to her: "Since not all men know that you are my sister, withdraw a little from the road until they pass." When they had passed, he called her and said: "Let us go our way, sister." But she did not answer. He searched for her and found her dead; the tracks of her feet were full of blood, for she had had no shoes. When he reported this to the old men, they disagreed among themselves about her salvation, whereupon God revealed things concerning her to one old man: how she had taken no care during the journey for her physical comfort, but had neglected her wounds, and had breathed her last and would have gone to great damnation, but that God received her repentance because of the sincerity of her heart.

*Chapter 25*

(1) A brother asked an old man: "Father, why are we thus attacked by demons?" The old man answered: "Because we have thrown away our weapons; that is, our penitence, humility, obedience, and poverty."

(2) A brother asked Abbot Sisoïus: "Father, do you think the devil pursues us as much as he did the people of olden times?" He replied: "He pursues men of our day much more, because various kinds of punishment are approaching when he shall be locked up with his legions, and he knows that there is a pool in which he shall be consumed in fire and sulphur. That is why he attacks men. He does not trouble himself to attack the weak, for he can overcome them whenever he wishes, but he attacks the strong and the great, to tumble them over numerous precipices."

(3) Abbot Pimenius asked Abbot Abraham: "How do demons attack us?" The old man said: "Demons do not fight with us, but we perform their desires; our desires have become demons to us and cause us trouble. Hence, the Apostle said: 'The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that you do not do what you would.'<sup>1</sup> Would you wish to know with whom demons fought? With Abbot Moses and those like him, but we are attacked by the desires of our own heart."

(4) A brother asked Abbot Achilles: "How do demons have power over us?" The old man answered: "Through our desires." And he added: "The woods of Lebanon said: 'How great and tall we are, yet we are cut down with a small piece of iron. If we do not give it any part of ourselves, it will not be able to attack us.' Accordingly, men came and made a handle for that axe of that same wood, and so they cut it down. Now, the wood stands for souls; the axe, the devil; the handle

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 5.17.

is our desire. So it is through our evil desires that we are attacked."

### *Chapter 26*

(1) A certain brother asked Abbot Moses: "How can a man deliver himself from the body?" The old man said to him: "Unless a man thinks that he has already been in the tomb three years, he cannot arrive at fulfillment of these words."

(2) Abbot Pimenius said: "That monk can become as one dead to this world who shuns two things, namely, rest for his body and vainglory."

(3) An old man said: "A monk will be free from every care when he is intent only upon good works. For when he performs good works, the devil comes and finds no room and departs; if he performs evil works, the devil comes frequently and attacks him and turns him towards a baser course."

(4) Blessed Antony used to warn his disciple: "Avoid your stomach and the necessities of this world and base desires and honor, as if you were absent from this world, and you will obtain repose."

### *Chapter 27*

(1) Abbot Antony said: "If a monk works a few days, then rests a while, and works again, then relaxes, he accomplishes nothing; he will not possess the perseverance of his patience."

(2) The old man said: "What is the use of commencing a task, if one does not learn to finish it? There should be nothing that is begun without being finished."

*Chapter 28*

(1) An old man said: "A man should work until he gains Christ. Once he has gained Christ, he will no longer be in danger, but he is permitted to labor in order that he may recall the tribulation of his labor and guard himself on all sides, for fear of losing the rewards of such labors. For God led the sons of Israel through the desert for forty years<sup>1</sup> that they might remember the tribulation of their journey and not desire to return that way again."

(2) A certain brother asked an old man: "How do they work who seek remission of their sins?" The old man answered: "Before the grace which is wrought in return for their labors reaches them, they are pale and in toil; but when, as a result of their former endurance, the grace of Christ has come upon them, they burst into flames and their souls exult and their face is as bright as the sun when it shines without clouds. When the sun is covered with clouds, it is pale; so the soul, when passions and temptations obscure it. That soul which is purified by the grace of God shines as brightly as the words: 'Great is his glory in your salvation.'"<sup>2</sup>

(3) He also said: "Although holy men may labor here, yet they rest to some extent elsewhere, for they are free from thoughts of this world."

(4) A certain brother asked an old man: "Why is it that men working in communities today do not receive grace as did people of old?" The old man answered: "Then, there was love, and each one lifted his neighbor up, but now, love has grown cold and each one drags his neighbors down. That is why they do not merit the grace of God."

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Exod. 16.35.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 20.6.

*Chapter 29*

(1) When someone asked Pimenius about hardness of the heart, the old man replied: "The nature of water is soft, of stone hard; but if water frequently drops upon stone, its dropping perforates the stone. So the word of God is sweet and soft, but our heart is hard. Therefore, a man, by listening frequently and by meditating upon the word of God, makes room for the fear of God to enter into him."

*Chapter 30*

(1) An old man said: "A monk must not ask what sort of person one man is, or how the health of another is, for by such questions he is distracted from prayer and falls into distractions and verbosities. Hence, there is nothing better than silence."

(2) A brother asked an old man: "If a brother comes and brings me words of others, do you suggest that I tell him not to do so?" The old man answered: "Say nothing, for we cannot even take heed of ourselves. We must be careful lest, in saying to a neighbor, 'Don't do this,' we do even worse ourselves later on." The brother asked him: "What, then, must we do?" and the old man replied: "If we have desired to be silent, the example alone is sufficient for our neighbor."

*Chapter 31*

(1) An old man said: "If someone speaks to you about the Scriptures or some other matter, do not argue with him; if he speaks well of them, agree with him; if he criticizes, say to him: 'You know whereof you speak.' The Apostle says: 'Do

not dispute with words.<sup>1</sup> Observing this, you will possess humility and avoid hatred. For if you persist in arguing and wish to defend your words, a cause for stumbling arises therefrom. Frequently, while you are praising someone else, an argument arises from your defense. If you have a serious argument about any matter at all, you will suffer no small harm and will never win repose. Devote yourself to meditation, arise with the fear of God both morning and evening, and you will not fear the attack of enemies."

### *Chapter 32*

(1) The blessed Antony used to say to his disciple: "If you seek to attain silence, do not think that you are performing a virtuous act, but confess that you are unworthy to speak."

(2) When a certain brother said to Abbot Sisoios: "I want to save my soul," he replied: "How can we save our soul when our tongue often leaps forth through an open door?"

(3) A certain brother asked an old man: "How long must silence be observed, father?" The old man replied: "Until you are asked a question, for if you are silent everywhere, you will win repose."

(4) An old man said: "Silence is a journey."

(5) An old man said: "A journey on God's account is good if it is accompanied by silence, but self-confidence is not a journey."

(6) Abbot Arsenius used to say: "A monk who journeys in another land must not approach as mediator of a cause; then he will achieve repose."

(7) Abbot Ampo used to say: "As a bee gathers honey wherever it goes, so a monk wherever he travels, if he go for the work of God, can bring the sweetness of his labors."

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Tim. 2:14.

*Chapter 33*

(1) After Abbot Theodore had been ordained deacon in Scete, he always refused to perform his office, and would flee to many places. The old men would bring him back again, saying: "Do not leave your place." He said to them: "Allow me to ask God whether he orders me to serve in this place." And he prayed thus: "Oh Lord, show me whether it be Thy will that I shall abide by my ordination." And he was shown a column of fire, extending from the earth to the sky, and a voice said to him: "Theodore, if you can become like this column, go and minister. What was said to the Levites and priests through Moses is enough, that with a clean heart and body, with pure hands and most clean vestments they should offer sacrifices for the children of Israel." Upon hearing this, he never consented again. When he came to church, they would ask him whether he would not serve or at least hold the cup, but he refused, saying: "If you speak another word to me about this matter, I will depart from hence." So they left him alone.

(2) When Abbot Isaac heard that the fathers wanted to make him a priest in Scete, he fled to Egypt and went into a field and hid in the grass. It happened that the brothers who were following him lay down to rest in that same field, because it was now night, and loosed their ass that it might feed. In feeding, it came to the place where Abbot Isaac was hiding. When it was morning, they looked for the ass and found the old man, and they marveled. As they were about to bind him, he said to them: "I no longer flee, for I know that it is by the command of God; wherever I flee, I shall come to the same fate."

(3) Abbot Motois once came from a place called Ragita in the territory of Gebilon. His disciple was with him. The bishop of that place saw him and detained him and made him a priest against his will. As they were eating together, the

bishop said to him: "Forgive me, father; I know that you did not desire this honor, but I was bold enough to do it because I wished to receive a blessing from you." The old man replied in humility: "Indeed, I was not at all anxious for this, but I am especially troubled because I have to be separated from the brother who is with me, and I am not able to fulfill my prayers alone." The bishop said to him: "If you know that he is worthy, I shall ordain him also." Abbot Motois replied: "Whether he is worthy I do not know; I only know that he is better than I." So the bishop ordained him. Yet they both remained to the end of their lives without ever approaching the altar. Wherefore the old man used to say: "I trust in God that I shall have no sure judgment because of this ordination, inasmuch as I have not presumed to make offering; for ordination belongs to those who are without guilt, just and spotless; and I know myself well."

### *Chapter 34*

(1) Abbot Arsenius was once asked by Abbot Marcus why he fled from men. He replied: "God knows that I love men, but I cannot be both with God and with men. The multitudes above and the virtues have but one will, while men have many and varied wills; for this reason, I cannot leave God and be with men."

(2) Once, when some of the brothers went to buy linen from the Thebaid, they said: "This is a good chance to visit the blessed Arsenius." When his disciple, Daniel, reported their arrival, Arsenius bade him ask them why they had come there from Alexandria. Upon learning that they had come to buy linen, Arsenius replied: "Then they shall not see my face, for they have not come for my sake, but on their own business. Go then, receive them, and show them hospitality, then dismiss them with the words: 'The old man cannot see you.'"



(3) While Abbot Besarion was walking with his disciple through the desert, they came to a certain cave. They entered and found a certain brother sitting and weaving rope. He would neither look at them nor greet them nor speak a word with them. So Abbot Besarion said to his disciple: "Let us leave, for this old man does not wish to speak with us." And they set out for Abbot John's. As they were returning, they came to the same cave, and Abbot Besarion said: "Let us go in to this brother, if perchance God may yet persuade him to speak to us." When they had entered, they found him dead. And he said to his disciple: "Come, brother, let us bury him, for it is for this that God has sent us here." As they were burying the dead man, they discovered that it was a woman, and they marveled and said: "Great is the mercy of God that even women may struggle and conquer demons." And they went back to their own, glorifying God who is the protector of all, and relating what they had seen.

### *Chapter 35*

(1) Abbot Moses used to preach to the hermits, saying: "There are four principal rules that need to be observed, namely, silence, obeying God's commands, humiliating oneself, and remaining poor. There are three virtues which it is difficult for a man to possess: that he should always mourn, that he should constantly be mindful of his sins, that he should place death before his eyes at every hour."

(2) Blessed Antony used to say: "The fathers of old went out into the desert and were made whole and became physicians, and they returned and healed others. But if any of us should happen to go out to the desert, we offer a cure to others before we are cured ourselves; and our infirmity returns to us, and our last troubles are worse than our former because of what we are told: 'Physician, first cure thyself.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke 4.23.

*Chapter 36*

(1) A certain brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "What brothers are of equal merit?" The old man answered: "If there are three brothers together, of whom the first is quiet in every word and deed, the second is ill but gives thanks, while the third ministers unto them with a clean conscience, these three are of equal merit."

(2) An old man said: "To do wrong or to lie or to swear falsely are alien to Christ. The soul becomes soiled in these four ways: by making friends with those who are in power, in eagerness for carnal desires; or by saying evil of one's neighbor; or by walking through the city without guarding his eyes; or by having any business of any sort with a woman."

(3) Blessed Arsenius used to relate that while he was sitting in his cell, he heard a voice telling him to go outside to watch certain people working. He went out and beheld a man drawing water from a well and putting it into a perforated jar, and the water would run out and flow back into the well. Again, he advanced a little way and saw an Ethiopian making a bundle of some wood he had cut. When he tried and found that he could not lift it, he added more wood to it. Then, upon trying again and still not being able to lift it, he added yet more wood. Abbot Arsenius advanced and saw before the city gate two young men sitting on horses; they were carrying a beam crosswise and could not enter the city, for the beam that they were carrying would not allow them to enter, and so they both remained outside the city. He who was showing this in the spirit to holy Arsenius said to him: "The one whom you saw first drawing water from a well and pouring it through a perforated jar back into the well is like a man giving alms, who imagines that he is performing a good deed, but, because he continues his iniquity in other works, these evils cause him to spoil and lose that small amount of good. The one whom you saw cutting wood and adding it to a big pile and making

it heavier is like a man of many sins who, after repentance, continues to pile another load upon his sins. Those whom you beheld unable to enter the city because the beam prevented them are those who appear to bear a miserable burden of pride and are unwilling to yield to one another so that they might be corrected and follow the humble way of Christ; hence, the former as well as the latter have remained outside the kingdom of God."

(4) A brother asked Abbot Sisoius: "An inheritance has been left to me by my parents; what shall I do with it?" The old man replied: "If I say, 'Give it to the church for the clerics,' they will feast on it. If I say, 'Give it to your relatives,' you will have no reward. But if you would fulfill the divine command, give it to the poor and needy and you will be perfect."

### *Chapter 37*

(1) Abbot Sisoius said: "When I was in the market, selling my baskets to a brother, I discovered that anger was coming upon me; so I dropped my wares and ran away."

(2) Abbot John said: "I was once crossing the desert in Scete, weaving palm braid; and I heard a camel driver speaking idle words; lest I become angry, I dropped my braid and ran away."

(3) A brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "What is the meaning of the Lord's words: 'Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends'?<sup>1</sup> How does one do this?" The old man answered: "If one hears an ill word from one's neighbor, and, although he could reply in kind, yet fights in his heart to endure the toil and forces himself not to reply ill so as to sadden the other, such a man lays down his life for his friend."

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<sup>1</sup> John 15.13.

(4) Abbot Macarius said: "If we recall the evils that we suffer from men, we lose the virtue of the recollection of God."<sup>2</sup> He also said: "If we recall the evils that are sent to us by demons, we shall be unperturbed, knowing that God from the beginning created good, while the devil sowed ill.<sup>3</sup> Behold, there are innumerable sources of perdition." And he added: "It is charged as a fault against a monk if, when hurt by his brothers, he does not first purge his heart in love and go to them. For the woman of Sunam would not have deserved to receive Eliseus into her house, except that she had no quarrel with anyone.<sup>4</sup> Now the woman of Sunam stands for the soul, and Eliseus represents the Holy Spirit; if the soul were not pure, it would not deserve to receive the Holy Spirit."<sup>5</sup>

### Chapter 38

(1) A brother asked Saint Antony: "What shall I do for my sins?" He replied: "He who desires to be freed from his sins will be freed from them by tears and weeping. He who wishes to be strengthened in virtues will be strengthened by weeping and tears. The very praise of the Psalms is mourning. Remember the example of Ezechia, King of Judah, as it is written in the Prophet Isaia, who by weeping not only recovered his health, but won an increase of life for fifteen years;<sup>1</sup> and by the outpouring of his tears, the strength of the Lord brought to death the advancing army of the enemy, even a hundred and eighty-five thousand.<sup>2</sup> Saint Peter the Apostle received by weeping what he had lost by denying

<sup>2</sup> Adding *Dei* from other texts.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. 13.25.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 4 Kings 4.8-37.

<sup>5</sup> Omitting the last sentence, which does not belong here.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isa. 38, esp. 3, 6, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa. 37.36.

Christ.<sup>3</sup> Mary, for washing the feet of the Lord with tears, deserved to hear that she had chosen the best part.<sup>4</sup> 'The fear of the Lord remains holy from generation to generation.' <sup>5</sup>

(2) Blessed Macarius said: "In truth, if for a monk criticism becomes praise, poverty riches, and a little food a banquet, he never dies. It is impossible for one who believes in God and piously worships Him to fall into unclean passion and the sin of demons."

### *Chapter 39*

(1) A brother asked Abbot Sisoïus: "After how long a time must a man cut off his passions?" He replied: "It is written in the Gospel: 'God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God, and does his will, him He hears.'<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when an attack comes, cut it off, for the soul is fragile; it should be armed before it is attacked by sins."

(2) A brother asked Abbot Pimenius: "What shall I do, since my thoughts disturb me as I sit in my cell?" He replied: "Despise none, judge none, speak evil of none; and God will give you rest and will cause your sitting down to be undisturbed. Consider, then, what old men are concerned for and how quiet they are. Meditate on the liturgical offices and learn the canonical hours day and night. Let the fear of the Lord not depart from your heart. Be not boastful and do not esteem yourself with the just. Be careful that in your every virtue you do not do your own will."

(3) He also said: "Just as flies do not approach a lamp which is lit, but if it is warm, they sit on it and turn into worms; so, if a monk is lit by the fire of the divine spirit,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. 26.75; Mark 14.72; Luke 22.62.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Luke 10.39, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 18.10.

<sup>1</sup> John 9.31.

demons flee, but if he is lukewarm, they attack and pursue him."

### *Chapter 40*

(1) A brother asked Saint Antony: "How is it that God promises good to the soul constantly in the Scriptures, yet the soul does not wish to remain in the state of goodness, but inclines to what is transitory, degrading, and unclean?" He replied: "To this may be added the words of the Psalmist: 'Were I to cherish wickedness in my heart, the Lord would not hear.'<sup>1</sup> You do not know that when your stomach is full of food many vices immediately well up, as our Savior predicted in the Gospel: 'What goes into the mouth does not defile the soul of a man; but that which goes into the inner man comes forth from the heart.'<sup>2</sup> See what He said before: 'evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, immorality, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies.'<sup>3</sup> For he who has not yet tasted the sweetness of heavenly things so that he seeks God with his whole heart turns, accordingly, to what is unclean. Who will be able to say rightly: 'I am become as a beast of burden before Thee: and I am always with Thee'?"<sup>4</sup>

### *Chapter 41*

(1) A brother addressed a certain old man: "Teach me, father." And he said to him: "Go, become fond of doing violence to yourself. Unsheath your sword and go forth to war." The brother said to him: "My thoughts do not permit me." The old man answered: "It is written: 'Call upon me in time

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 65.18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. 15.11.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. 15.19.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 72.22, 23.

of thy distress; I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me.<sup>1</sup> Call, therefore, upon God and He will free thee."

(2) Two brothers came upon a holy man sitting alone in Scete and one of them said: "Father, I have learned by heart the whole of the Old and New Testaments." The old man said to him: "You have filled the air with words." And the other said: "And I have copied the whole of both the Old and New Testaments, and I have them with me." To him he replied: "You have filled your windows with paper. Do you not know who said: 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power'?"<sup>2</sup> And again: 'It is not they who hear the Law that are just in the sight of God; but it is they who follow the Law that will be justified.'<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, they asked him the way of salvation. He answered them: "'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'<sup>4</sup> To all who observe these quotations, a few things are sufficient."

### *Chapter 42*

(1) When one of the young brothers questioned Abbot Agatho in the words: "I wish to dwell with the brothers: tell me how I should live with them," the old man replied: "Observe this above all, that you remain always just as you were the first day you entered among them; then, you will fulfill your earthly life in peace. But beware lest you become overbearing in your speech; as the Apostle says: 'No one serving as Christ's soldier entangles himself in worldly affairs.'<sup>1</sup>"

(2) Agatho also said: "If you dwell with your neighbor,

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 49.15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 4.20.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 2.13.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 110.10.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 2.4.

be as a column of stone which, if it is harmed, does not become angry; if it is praised, does not lift itself up."

(3) Abbot Pimenius asked Abbot Nesteron, who was sitting in the monastery: "Where did you acquire this virtue, brother, that, whenever a quarrel arises in the monastery, you neither speak nor interfere as mediator?" Though he was unwilling to speak, he was compelled by the old man and said: "Forgive me, father, for in the beginning when I entered here I said to my thought: 'Lo, you and this donkey are alike. Just as it gets beaten without speaking and gets thrashed without returning an answer, so you must be also, for the Psalm says: "I am become as a beast of burden before Thee: and I am always with Thee."'"<sup>2</sup>

(4) Once, when the tribe of Mazici overran Scete and killed many of the fathers, Abbot Pimenius, along with another older father named Anub and five other fathers, fled from there and came to a place which is called Terenuthi. There, they found an ancient deserted temple and all seven of them remained in it together, until they should learn in what part of Egypt each was to dwell. They decided among themselves that for one week each one should remain quietly by himself and no one should speak to another. At the time they were doing this, there was in the temple a statue of some heathen god. Abbot Anub would rise in the morning and throw stones at the statue's face, then, would return in the evening and would say to it: "I have sinned; forgive me." This he did through the whole week. On the Sabbath, when they came together, Abbot Pimenius said to him: "What was your intention all week long when you, a believer, said to an idol: 'Forgive me'?" The old man, Anub, said to him: "I did this for your sakes. Tell me, when I threw stones at this idol, did it speak or become angry? When I asked forgiveness, did it exalt itself and become puffed up?" Abbot Pimenius replied: "No, indeed." Then the old man said to him: "Lo, we are

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ps. 72.22, 23.



seven brothers. If you wish that we remain together to seek gain for our souls, let this idol be an example to us not to become angry when we are wronged, nor to vaunt or extol ourselves if forgiveness is asked of us. If you are not willing to do so, then each one should go where he wishes." They threw themselves upon the ground and promised that they would do so; and so they remained for many years in great humility and abstinence, appointing one of the number administrator. They possessed perfection and one common desire. Whatever was placed before them at table, they ate, without anyone remarking: "Bring us that" or "I don't want to eat this." Each night, they slept four hours and recited Psalms four hours and worked four hours. By day, they divided the various hours for divine offices, working and reading and gathering palm leaves until the ninth hour. After this, they prepared a meal for themselves, gathering some herbs from the ground.

### *Chapter 43*

(1) A brother asked the holy Abbot Serapion, who had ten thousand monks in his charge: "Other brothers in the monastery have chosen me to instruct them; show me what is your bidding." Serapion replied: "Perhaps my command is harsh. Our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us through the Gospel: 'If you love me, keep my commandments.'<sup>1</sup> When the disciples disputed among themselves as to their authority, which of them was superior, he said to them: 'Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be the first among you shall be the slave of all.'<sup>2</sup> The Apostle Peter in his Letter warns the shepherds of the flocks: 'Tend the flock of God which is among you, governing, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God; nor yet

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<sup>1</sup> John 14.15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark 10.43, 44.

for the sake of base gain, . . . but become a pattern to the flock. And when the Prince of the shepherds appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.<sup>3</sup> So first, do what you preach, that you may offer them, not only advice, but a model, that they may imitate your examples. Therefore, be not a hireling, but a shepherd of sheep,<sup>4</sup> for our Savior called him blessed 'whom he has set over his household to give them their food in due time.'"<sup>5</sup>

(2) Abbot Moses asked Abbot Silvanus: "Can a man apprehend the beginning of his conversion to the true way of life from day to day?" He replied: "It is necessary for each to learn something from all. As he rises in the morning, let each begin wisdom: in every virtuous deed, in every command of God, in great patience and long-suffering and love of God, with humility of soul and body, with much endurance and sojourning in his cell, in prayer and supplication, with mourning, with purity of heart and eyes, with control of his tongue and speech, in renunciation of material things and the desires of the flesh, with torture and struggle, in spiritual continence and strife of battle, in penitence and grief, in simplicity of heart, in silence, in fasting and nightly vigils, in manual labor, according to the word of Apostle Paul: 'Working with your hands,'<sup>6</sup> in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labor and hardships and persecutions,<sup>7</sup> in holes and caves and caverns.<sup>8</sup> Be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only,<sup>9</sup> working your talent into two,<sup>10</sup> wearing a wedding garment,<sup>11</sup> founded upon a strong rock.<sup>12</sup>

"Alms and faith must not leave you. Reflect that every day

3 1 Peter 5.2-4.

4 Cf. John 10.12.

5 Matt. 24.45.

6 1 Cor. 4.12.

7 Cf. 2 Cor. 11.27.

8 Cf. Heb. 11.38.

9 Cf. James 1.22.

10 Cf. Matt. 25.14-30.

11 Cf. Matt. 22.11-14.

12 Cf. Matt. 7.24, 25.

death is near; as though you were already enclosed in the tomb, have no care for this world, since anxiety for the world and the desire for riches are the thorns which choke the good seed and against which the Lord warned in the Gospel.<sup>13</sup> Let hunger, humility, and grief not depart from you, for the Lord 'scatters the bones'<sup>14</sup> of those who please themselves. Fear must pervade within you at every hour, as it is written: 'For fear of you, O Lord, we conceived and writhed in pain, giving birth to the spirit of salvation.'<sup>15</sup> Consider these things and any other virtue that there be therein, and do not measure yourself with the great or esteem yourself just; but believe yourself inferior to every creature and viler than every man that is a sinner. 'For if anyone thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself.'<sup>16</sup> Judge not your neighbor, nor despise those who sin in other ways, but grieve for your own sins, and be not anxious for the deeds of any man. Be gentle of spirit, not inclined to anger. Let there be no hatred in your heart, and fight not against your enemy without cause, nor despise him in his time of trial, nor return evil for evil, but be peaceful with all: this 'is the bond of perfection.'<sup>17</sup> Do not entrust yourself to one who does wrong, nor rejoice with him who does evil to his neighbor. Do not criticize others, for God is judge and witness in all things. Do not hate anyone because of his sin, for it is written: 'Do not judge, that you may not be judged.'<sup>18</sup> When you accuse another, see that you are not committing worse sins. Do not despise a sinner, but pray for him, that God may give him conversion to penitence; and if you hear of anyone that he is acting unjustly, reply in these words: 'Am I a judge of these things? I am but a man and a sinner, dead beneath my sins. A

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Luke 8.7.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ps. 52.6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Isa. 26.18.

<sup>16</sup> Gal. 6.3.

<sup>17</sup> Col. 3.14.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 7.1.

dead man has no reason to be concerned for anyone.' He who performs and thinks on these things is a worker of every kind of justice, while of Christ our Redeemer, the prophet proclaims: 'I am a worm, and not a man.'<sup>19</sup> And another prophet, Habacuc, says: 'The stone in the wall cried out, and the beam in the woodwork answered it.'<sup>20</sup> Yet, while we are extolled in many things, we are cast down in many things. But he who guards these things lives in the grace and virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ."

#### *Chapter 44*

Once upon a time, some wise anchorites, holy and spiritual, twelve in number, gathered together and asked of themselves that each should speak what improving thoughts he had in his cell and what spiritual meditations he held in his mind.

(1) And the first, who was older than the rest, said: "My brothers, ever since I began to live a quiet life, I mortified myself against these actions which are entirely from outside, remembering what is written: 'Let us break their fetters and their bonds from us.'<sup>1</sup> And, as it were, constructing a wall between my mind and the acts of my body, I said in my mind: 'Just as he who is within the wall sees not him who stands without, so you must not desire to see exterior acts, but look upon yourself, increasing daily your hope in God.' You must consider evil thoughts and wicked desires like serpents or the offspring of scorpions. If I ever feel them rising in my heart, I check them with angry threats and cause them to dry up; and I never cease my anger against my body and my mind, lest they commit some base deed."

(2) The second said: "I said, as soon as I renounced the world: 'Today, you are reborn; today, you have begun to serve

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 21.7.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Hab. 2.11.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 2.3.

God; today, you have begun to dwell here. Be like a stranger today, who tomorrow shall be set free.' Thus I counseled myself every day."

(3) The third said: "At dawn, I ascend to my God; I worship Him and throw myself upon my face and confess my sins; as I descend, I worship the angels of God, asking them to beseech God in my behalf and that of every creature. When I have fulfilled this, I go to the abyss; as the Jews when they go to Jerusalem, gashing themselves<sup>2</sup> and shedding tears and weeping for the fate of their fathers, so I go about and watch and subject my own body to torments, and weep with those who weep."

(4) The fourth said: "I am as if I were sitting on the Mount of Olives with the Lord and His disciples. I said to myself: 'Do not recognize anyone according to the flesh, but always with them be an imitator of celestial life, like the good Mary Magdalene, sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His words: "Make yourselves holy and perfect, even as your heavenly Father";<sup>3</sup> also "learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart." ' "<sup>4</sup>

(5) The fifth said: "I gaze upon the angels going up and down to summon souls, and I always await my end, saying: 'My heart is steadfast, O God; my heart is steadfast.' "<sup>5</sup>

(6) The sixth said: "I have decided that my words are daily heard by the Lord, and I believe he says to me: 'Labor for me and I shall give you rest. Fight yet a little while, and you shall see my salvation and my glory. If you love me, if you are my sons, turn and ask for the Father. If you are my brothers, blush for me, that I have suffered many things on your behalf. If you are my sheep, follow the Lord's passion.' "

(7) The seventh said: "I constantly meditate upon, and

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark 5.5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. 5.48.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 11.29.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 107.2.

unceasingly speak to myself about 'faith, hope, and charity';<sup>6</sup> that I may rejoice in hope, may never cause anyone to be sad in love, and may be strengthened in faith."

(8) The eighth said: "I gladly<sup>7</sup> await the devil seeking someone to devour. Wherever he goes, I wait for him with my inner eyes, and I call the Lord God to my aid against him, that he may cause no harm nor prevail in any way, especially against those who fear God."

(9) The ninth said: "I daily await the gathering of the intellectual virtues;<sup>8</sup> I see the God of glory in their midst resplendent over all. When I depart from that, I ascend into heaven, awaiting the wonderful beauties of the angels and the hymns which they unceasingly render unto God and their sweet songs; I am carried away by the sounds and the voices and the sweetness, so that I am pleased to recall what is written: 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.'<sup>9</sup> And everything that is upon the earth, I value as ashes and ordure."

(10) The tenth said: "I behold my angel sitting next to me, and I guard myself, remembering what is written: 'I set the Lord ever before me; for with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.'<sup>10</sup> For I fear him as one who guards my ways, and daily ascends to God and reports my deeds and words."

(11) The eleventh said: "I have personified the virtues, such as abstinence, chastity, kindness, and love, and I have placed them before me and surrounded myself with them, and wherever I go I say to myself: 'Where are your followers? Be not one of little courage, do not fail, but have them always near you. Whatever you do, speak of virtue, that after your

6 1 Cor. 13.13.

7 Reading *volens* for *volentem*.

8 Or possibly "spiritual powers." The stars may be meant.

9 Ps. 18.2.

10 Ps. 15.8.

death, they may testify concerning you before God that they found rest in you.' "

(12) The twelfth said: "You, fathers, possess both the heavenly way of life and heavenly wisdom. No wonder that I behold you lifted up by your deeds and pursuing higher things. What shall I say? For, by virtue, you have been carried across the earth, alienating yourselves entirely from it. What shall I say? I would not be wrong in calling you angels upon earth and men in heaven. Yet, I judge myself unworthy of these things; I see my sins; wherever I go, they always precede me on the right and on the left. I have assigned myself to hell, saying: 'Be with those of whom you are worthy; you will soon be numbered with them.' I behold there such wailing and unceasing tears as can never be described by anyone. I behold some making shrill noises with their teeth and leaping with their whole bodies and trembling from head to foot. I throw myself upon the ground and grasp the dust and pray to God that I may never endure the trials which are their fate. And I behold an unmeasurable sea of boiling fire, and men weeping and wailing, and the flood of that fire, as some think, reaches the heavens; and in that tremendous sea are innumerable men thrown down from earth; with one voice, they all shout and wail together, such wailings and voices as no one has ever heard upon earth; all the shrubbery is burned like dry wood, and the mercy of the Lord is turned away from them because of their injustices. Then I bewail the race of men, that it dares to speak or listen to anyone, when so many evils are set upon the earth. I make my mind dwell upon these things, meditating grief, as the Lord said, judging myself unworthy of heaven and earth, and recalling what is written: 'My tears are my food day and night.' "<sup>11</sup>

These are the responses of the wise and spiritual fathers. May their worthy memory also come to us, that we may reveal

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<sup>11</sup> Ps. 41.4.

in our works this narration of the holy life, that we may become without reproach, perfect and blameless, and may please our Savior, to whom is honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.





*WRITINGS  
OF  
LEANDER OF SEVILLE*



## INTRODUCTION

St. Leander of Seville, brother of the more famous Isidore, was the eldest of four children of one Severianus, all born in Cartagena, all having attained high church connections.<sup>1</sup> The father held a position of importance in either the civil or military branch of the government, and there are unproved traditions that he was related to the royal family. He was probably of Roman stock. Besides Leander and Isidore, the other children were Fulgentius and a sister, Florentina. In 554 King Athanagild ceded several seaport towns to the Byzantines, who proceeded to seize more territory than they had been granted, including the town of Cartagena. Severianus was forced to flee with his family to Seville. It is conjectured that Leander was born about 540, and so was fourteen years of age at the time of the family's exile. He mentions in the last chapter of his treatise to his sister<sup>2</sup> that she was too young at the time to have remembered anything about the city of her birth. Isidore was perhaps only a baby, as the parents entrusted his upbringing to the elder brothers. Isidore survived both of his brothers and included a chapter on Leander in his book *On Illustrious Men*,<sup>3</sup> from which we derive important direct information on his life and works. The same final chapter of the treatise to his sister also contains a touching passage concerning the mother of the children: "I questioned our mother," writes Leander, "wanting to know if she was willing to return to her country. She knew that she had been removed for her

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1 The account of Leander's life and of his family relations is based on the ancient sources as cited and on Pérez de Urbel, *Los monjes españoles* . . . 194-214.

2 *De institutione virginum* 31.

3 *De viris illustribus* 41 (PL 7.1103-1104).

own safety by the will of God and she used to swear a solemn oath that she never wanted to see and never would see her own country again, and with many tears she would add: 'My sojourn has given me to know God; I shall die a sojourner, and I shall have my tomb where I found the knowledge of God.' With Jesus as witness, I will recall that it lay in her inmost desires not to revisit her country, no matter how long she lived." It is apparent that the mother of these famous children did not become a Christian until after their birth and exile.

The other brother, Fulgentius, had gone back to his native city at the time of the writing of the same passage, for Leander goes on: "I consider myself most unfortunate to have sent to the same place our brother, Fulgentius, whose dangers I constantly fear and dread. He will be safer, however, if you keep safe and pray for him in your absence."<sup>4</sup> Whatever the nature of this danger, Fulgentius survived and by 590 or 600 had become Bishop of Astigi in the Province of Baetica near Seville, where he was still located at the time of the Second Council of Seville in 619. Isidore dedicated some works to Fulgentius.

Leander first became a monk and later Bishop of Seville and Metropolitan of the Province of Baetica. He was bishop by 579, when King Leovigild associated with himself in the kingdom his two sons Hermenegild and Recared. Leander's efforts were directed at reform of the clergy and conversion of the Goths from Arianism, which was the cause of much civil and religious strife during the next ten years. His efforts were mostly behind the scenes as we read the reports today, but a great deal of the success and final triumph of orthodox Catholicism must be attributed to him.<sup>5</sup>

The Visigothic kingdom was officially Arian, although there is reason to believe that among the people Catholicism pre-

<sup>4</sup> Above, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> A concise account of Visigothic history in this period may be found in *Cambridge Mediaeval History* 2 (New York 1926) 163-174.

dominated. Only among the Sueves in Galicia had the work of conversion by Martin of Braga succeeded. Hermenegild, the elder son and designated successor of Leovigild, settled in Seville and married Ingundis of strong Catholic background. With her aid, Hermenegild was converted and baptized. The Queen Gothswinda was an equally fervent Arian and by 580 had persuaded her husband to start an active persecution of Catholics, which continued for several years, as father and son had no desire to come into direct strife. Eventually, however, Seville fell and Hermenegild was killed, though probably against his father's wish. During this time, we hear of Leander's making a trip to Constantinople, the reasons given being somewhat contradictory, "on a mission for the Church," and "in exile." Vega appears to have solved the difficulty by supposing two trips to the East, the first about 580 as a religious ambassador from Hermenegild to the Emperor, and the second about 584 after the fall of Seville "in exile." On one or both of these trips, Leander found Gregory the Great in Constantinople; a close friendship developed between the two. During his time of exile, Leander was busy writing tracts against the Arian beliefs. Not much later, the king dropped his opposition to Catholicism and Leander was able to return to Seville. On his deathbed late in 586, Leovigild repented and specifically entrusted to Leander's care his younger son and successor, Recared. A few months after Recared's accession, all of Spain became officially Catholic, but it took two years more to work out the differences with the remaining Arians. Finally, in a general Council which met at Toledo on May 4, 589, Recared declared his official position, the remaining Arians subscribed to the Nicene Creed, articles of faith were renewed, and the assembly, which lasted several days, was concluded by a triumphant sermon, delivered by Leander, on the successful conversion of the Goths.

This sermon is preserved with the minutes of the Third Council of Toledo in all of the conciliar manuscripts. Isidore

referred to it as a "Sermon on the Triumph of the Church for the Conversion of the Goths." The text used for the present translation is in PL 72.893-898.<sup>6</sup>

The only known translation of this sermon is the German version by Alfons Hug.<sup>7</sup> There is no English interpretation, but a helpful summary is given by Vega.<sup>8</sup>

Leander lived eleven years more to enjoy his successes and to continue his work. During this time, he may have made a third trip to Constantinople. He certainly maintained a close friendship with Gregory, now Pope Gregory, who honored him with a special gift of a pallium, but Leander's letters to the Pope and to other bishops, mentioned by Isidore, have all vanished. We have three letters<sup>9</sup> which Pope Gregory wrote to Leander and when Gregory's *Moralia* or *Commentary on Job* was published in 595, it contained a dedicatory preface to Leander, who had suggested and urged the completion of this great work.<sup>10</sup>

Leander's death in Seville probably occurred on May 13, 600, and he was succeeded in office by his brother, Isidore. Other works mentioned in Isidore's biographical account include a collection of prayers for the Psalter, a letter to Pope Gregory on baptism, and a letter to one of his brothers "that death is not to be feared by anyone." None of these has been identified among existing manuscripts. A "Sermon for the Feast of St. Vincent Martyr" was assigned to Leander by Florez and printed by Vega,<sup>11</sup> but scholars have not generally accepted the identification.

6 Taken from Mansi, *Collectio canonum* 9.1002-1005.

7 "Des hl. Leander Lobrede auf die Kirche," *Benediktinische Monatschrift* 9 (1927) 372-376.

8 El "De institutione virginum" de San Leandro de Sevilla 56-58.

9 PL 77.496, 778, 1050.

10 PL 75.509-516.

11 Pp. 133-136.

*On the Training of Nuns*

The best known work of Leander is one which Isidore described as "a book for his sister, Florentina, on the training of nuns and the contempt of the world." It consists of a long introduction, one-third of the whole treatise, discussing the advantages for a virgin of abandoning the world and espousing Christ. It is directed, first of all, personally to Florentina, who was just then entering a nunnery. Its terms are so broad, however, that it has often been taken as a general set of rules for nuns and referred to as the *Rule of Leander*. The second section of the work consists of thirty-one chapters on the various virtues of nuns and some practical precepts for social and religious life, even including discussion of meat, wine, and bathing, but it is not a detailed way of life for nuns, for it does not consider a daily and hourly regimen. Isidore tells us that the author himself is responsible for the division into chapters. The standard reference text for this work has been PL 72.873-894.<sup>12</sup> In many cases the text therein is far from satisfactory. This version, though current in Spain before the eleventh century, contains only twenty-one chapters in the second part of the work. A. C. Vega discovered that a ninth-century manuscript in the Escorial, a.I.13, has a longer version, in which Chapter 3 is twice as long as that previously known and there are ten more new chapters immediately following. From the content, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the longer text represents the original version of Leander. Therefore, a full gathering seems to have been lost from the archetype of the manuscripts from which previous editions were made. Vega published the full version in 1948, and the present translation is, in general, based upon it. The order and numbering of the chapters in his manuscript are preserved here, with the old numbers in parentheses for identifi-

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<sup>12</sup> A reprint from Holsten-Brockie, *Codex Regularum I* (Augsburg 1759) 405-418.



cation. In spite of the completeness of this manuscript, its text is somewhat corrupt, but may now be emended in places by a Monte Cassino manuscript which contains a good deal of the new material and was published by Madoz.<sup>13</sup> Vega's text has a number of misprints and the punctuation often has to be disregarded.

The only translation of this work into any language known to me is by Prudencio de Sandoval,<sup>14</sup> printed in 1604. I have not located a copy of this work, and the only help I have received in interpretation of occasional difficult passages is from the discussion, notes, and summary in the long preface to Vega's edition.<sup>15</sup>

Much of the variation between manuscript families is certainly due to various attempts to adapt the work as a *Rule* for nuns. Even the only complete version, the oldest of all, shows this in the omission of Florentina's name, leaving *soror* standing alone. The other tradition has omitted still more that was of a personal nature.

Just before the first publication of the long version, Madoz had shown<sup>16</sup> to what extent the ideas of Leander on the religious life are parallel to those of Jerome, Cassian, Cyprian, and Augustine. Vega adds Hilary and Ambrose to this list, but it is important to remark that Leander's borrowings are never slavish and verbal, nor in the style of the original; he has studied the thoughts of his predecessors, but written in his own style.

Isidore's affection for his brother and early teacher is con-

13 J. Madoz, "Una nueva transmisión del 'Libellus de institutione virginum,'" 407-424. He gives the full text of manuscript Casin. 331, which has the chapters in this order (Vega's numbering): 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 27, 25, 26, 28, 30. The final chapter alone is printed in Florez, *España Sagrada* 9 (Madrid 1752) App. V 355-357.

14 Prudencio de Sandoval, *Instrucción que S. Leandro, arzobispo de Sevilla, dió a su hermana S. Florentina de la vida y observancia de las monjas* (Valladolid 1604).

15 Especially pp. 65-80.

16 J. Madoz, "Varios enigmas de la 'Regla' de San Leandro," *Miscellanea Mercati* 1.265-295.

trolled and subdued in his historical account, though he does permit this description: "a man of suave eloquence, outstanding ability, and highly renowned for his life and teaching." The communication to his sister is described by Vega<sup>17</sup> as: "of intimate character, familiar expression, sententious language. His heart flies on the wings of the imagination over the fields of faith and the flowery gardens of chastity with such enthusiasm that, at times, he far exceeds his goal. The fire which he has in his heart, and tries to communicate to his sister, makes him verbose and, at times, tortured in concept. Yet he possesses all the freshness of spontaneity and the warmth of improvisation and delicate emotion of epistolary intimacy."

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<sup>17</sup> P. 63.

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## THE TRAINING OF NUNS AND THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD

*(De institutione virginum et contemptu mundi)*

*Leander, bishop by the grace of God, to my beloved daughter  
in Christ and sister Florentina:*

As I was reflecting, dearest sister Florentina, to what heaps of wealth I might make you heir and by what sort of inheritance I might enrich you, many images of false blessings came to mind. Rejecting these ideas from my thought as one drives away annoying flies with his hand, I reflected: gold and silver are of the earth and return to the earth; estates, inheritances, and incomes are worthless and transitory, "for this world, as we see it, is passing away."<sup>1</sup> Anything that I have seen beneath the sun, sister, I have not considered worthy of you; nothing have I believed completely consonant with your office; for I saw that all will be changing and ephemeral and empty. Whence I realized the truth of the words of Solomon, who said: "I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards; I made gardens and orchards, and set out in them trees of all sorts. And I constructed for myself reservoirs to water a flourishing woodland. I acquired male and female slaves, and slaves were born in my house. I also had cattle and flocks of sheep, flocks of goats also, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem. I amassed for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces. I got for myself male and female singers and all human luxuries,

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 7.31.

cups and vessels for the serving, to pour out wine. And I stored up more riches than all others before me in Jerusalem."<sup>2</sup>

That all this was but mortal pomp he realized, and concluded by saying: "But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold! all was vanity and vexation of mind, with nothing gained under the sun."<sup>3</sup> And again he said: "I detested all the fruits of my labor under the sun, because I must leave them to a man who is to come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over the fruits of my labors and solicitations. This also is vanity. So I ceased and my feelings turned to despair of further labor under the sun."<sup>4</sup>

Instructed by such an oracle, I would think myself not a true parent, sister, if I were to enrich you with those things which are not built on a stable foundation, which, when subjected to worldly fates, would desert you and leave you destitute. I would also heap hardships on you and subject you to fear and trembling, if I thought that I should confer upon you, my sister, what a thief can take away, moth pierce, rust consume, fire devour, earth decay, water erase, sun burn, rain spoil, and ice crush. Surely, when the mind is engaged in such human things it is turned away from God and withdraws from the immovable and unchanging form of truth. Nor can the heart, agitated by so many troubles of the world and lashed by the goads of so many temporal cares, receive unto itself the sweetness of the Divine Word and the blessing of the Holy Spirit. If I were to bind you with such knots, to load you with such weights, and to oppress you with a burden of worldly thoughts, you would consider me an enemy rather than a parent; you would consider me an agent of destruction rather than a brother.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eccles. 2.4-9.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Eccles. 2.11.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Eccles. 2.18-20.

So, then, dearest sister, since, of all that is included beneath the axis of heaven and is borne up by the foundations of the world and is revolved upon the face of the earth, we have found not a thing worthy of enriching us, it is above the skies that we must seek, whence you received the gift of virginity, that you may also find there the reward and inheritance of that virginity. For merit is recognized and recompensed in comparison with one's integrity. Just as virginity would be esteemed cheap if adorned with the transitory goods of this world, so it is outstanding and excellent when it tramples and rejects worldly pleasures, while preserving on earth the integrity of the angels. What, then, is the heredity of virginity? Is it not that which David, singer of hymns, mentions in the Psalms: "O Lord, my allotted portion";<sup>5</sup> and again: "O Lord, my part."<sup>6</sup> See, my blessed sister, how much you have achieved; see to what a high peak you have attained, how you have found the grace of many benefits in one and the same Christ. He is, indeed, your true Bridegroom, He is also your brother, He is likewise your friend, He is your inheritance, He is your reward, He is God and the Lord. You have in Him a Bridegroom to love: "For he is fair in beauty above the sons of men."<sup>7</sup> He is a true brother for you to hold, for by adoption you are the daughter of Him whose natural Son Christ is. He is a friend of whom you need not doubt, for He Himself says: "Thou art my only lover."<sup>8</sup> You have in Him the inheritance which you may embrace, for He is Himself the portion of your inheritance. You have in Him the reward which you may recognize, for His Blood is your redemption. You have in Him God by whom you may be ruled, the Lord to fear and honor.

Virginity wins a special favor for itself in Christ in that a nun may claim as her Bridegroom one before whom angels tremble, whom powers serve, whom virtues obey, to whom

5 Ps. 15.5.

6 Ps. 118.57.

7 Cf. Ps. 44.3.

8 Cf. Cant. 6.3.

things celestial and terrestrial bow down; to His couch she hastens adorned with all virtues; Him she cherishes in the chamber of her heart, a chaste couch. What more could she confer upon Him when Christ has offered Himself as her Bridegroom and has weighed His Blood to be a dowry and a gift? Men who take wives are accustomed to furnish dowries, to give presents, and to hand over their estates to pay for the loss of chastity, so that they appear to have bought rather than to have taken wives. Your Bridegroom, O maid, gave you His Blood for a dowry; with that He redeemed you; with that He took you as His companion, that you might not lose your chastity and yet might have rewards.

To the same extent that His gift of a dowry is more generous, just so is His love more immense. For He deeply loves the one whom He espoused with His own Blood. And for this, He preferred to have His Body opened by wounds through the thrust of a sword, that He might buy your purity for Himself and consecrate your chastity. He loved equally all mankind, so that, just as His death is our life and His humility is the curing of our pride, so our integrity was bought with His wounds, for He wished to be struck Himself, rather than to permit us to be struck by the "hammer of the whole earth."<sup>9</sup> "You have been bought with a price," says the Apostle; "do not become the slaves of men."<sup>10</sup> Why should you, a virgin, wish to give a man a body already redeemed by Christ? One has redeemed you and you wish to marry another? Do you enjoy liberty at the cost of another's freedom and condemn yourself to voluntary servitude? If the whole world is inscribed as a dowry, what is more precious than the Blood of Christ by which the world was redeemed? Weigh the reward and the cost, that you may know that He who redeemed is worth more than that which He redeemed. How insufficiently does a virgin

<sup>9</sup> Jer. 50.23; cf. St. Jerome, *Translatio homiliarum Originis in Ieremiam* 3.1, PL 25.606.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 7.23, 24.

understand, who spurns the buyer and seeks the merchandise; who scorns the Blood of Christ and embraces the world which was redeemed!

I am not worthy, dearest sister, to speak of the rewards of virginity, for it is an ineffable gift, concealed from the eyes, hidden from the ears, veiled from the understanding. What all the saints hope to become and what the whole Church promises will happen after the resurrection, that you already are. "This corruptible," says the Apostle, "must put on incorruption,"<sup>11</sup> but only after the resurrection of the body. Yet you already know the glory of incorruption. You already possess that share of glory in the present world. How great, then, is the blessing that is laid aside for you in the future! What crown awaits you in eternity, since you already have here the grace of incorruption, which many desire to achieve! Rejoice, therefore, that you are such as you have been formed by the hands of God. For He makes clean whom He has endowed with chastity, whom He has prepared for the rewards of chastity. But men wickedly corrupt nature which God formed to be chaste. This is the first sin of mankind: this is the cause of hereditary stain, in that our first parents were unwilling to be what they had been created; therefore, they deserved to be condemned in themselves and in their offspring. Renew in yourselves, O virgins, the receptacle of chastity which the first men lost in paradise. For you have preserved the condition of the firstborn men by persevering in the state in which they were created. But beware of their examples. Alas, dearest sister, avoid the examples of the first creatures; shudder at the hissing of the ancient serpent, lest the earth be infected and start to bear thorns and thistles,<sup>12</sup> and what should beget lilies and roses as a sign of virginity produce instead nettles and chaff,<sup>13</sup> the one to prick, the other to tear.

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. 15.53.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Matt. 7.16.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Rom. 11.16.



For you are the first fruits of the body of the Church. You, then, out of the whole mass of Christ's Body, are oblations accepted by God and consecrated on the altars. In proportion to your determination and in proportion to its own faith, the whole Church has won the name of virginity, while the better and more weighty part therein is won by you, who have dedicated to Christ the chastity of your minds and bodies. Using that manner of speaking in which the whole is named from the part or the part from the whole, although she may remain a virgin in faith in respect to her members as a whole, yet she is not unsuitably a virgin in that part of the members which you represent, namely, the body.

Meditate like the dove, holiest sister, and think extensively of the glory that awaits you in the future, in that you have not given in to flesh and blood nor surrendered that most holy body to corruption. Yea, even dare to hope, and realize with what embraces Christ desires to receive you, who have trodden upon the enticements of the world; with what longing the virgin band awaits you, whom the heights of heaven behold hastening up those steps by which that virgin band reaches Christ. Mary, Mother of God, rejoices, too, the supreme example of virginity, mother of incorruption, who by her example bore you and remains pure: she bore you a living proof, yet knew not pain; she bore the Bridegroom, yet is a Virgin. Daily she bears brides, yet is a Virgin. Blessed is that womb which was able to bear without being corrupted; blessed that fertility, which in bearing filled the world and won heaven as its reward, yet did not lose the veil of virginity. Let your heart, my sister, burn with that fire which Christ sent on earth. Be aroused by the flame of that fire; behold in your mind's eye the bands of maidens accompanying Mary; follow those bands, join them with eager heart. Hasten there, hurry there, for: "There is laid up a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will give to you in that day."<sup>14</sup>

14 Cf. 2 Tim. 4.8.

Realize that your brother's heart desires your safe journey, realize that your brother's most fervent desire is that you should be with Christ. Although I do not have within myself what I wish you to achieve, and may grieve that I have lost what I want you to keep,<sup>15</sup> yet, meanwhile, I shall have some portion of forgiveness if you, the better part of our body, do not walk "in the way of sinners,"<sup>16</sup> if you hold most firmly to that which you have. Alas for me, if another should receive your crown. You are my shelter in Christ; you, dearest sister, are my security; you are my most sacred offering, through which I doubt not that I shall be purified of the uncleanness of my sins. If you are acceptable to God, if you shall lie with Christ upon the chaste couch, if you shall cling to the embrace of Christ with the most fragrant odor of virginity, surely, when you recall your brother's sins, you will obtain the indulgence which you request for that brother's guilt. He who has joined you to His company will not sadden you. With His left hand, in which is honor and glory, under your head, with His right arm, in which is length of life, He will embrace you.<sup>17</sup> Held thus in the Bridegroom's embraces, you may ask and obtain pardon for me. Your love in Christ shall be my indulgence, and however little hope of forgiveness I have, if the sister whom I love shall be married to Christ, and, if in that terrible and dreadful judgment when there is a weighing of deeds, acts, and omissions, and I, woe is me, am forced to give an account of my own services, you will be my comfort and my solace, then, the punishment that is due me for my errors may possibly be relieved by the intercession of your chastity. By your advance in virtue, you will defend me of my guilty deeds if you cling to Christ; and if you please Him, I shall not be weighed down by what I have done to displease Him; while He is indulgent to you, He will spare me; nor will He allow

<sup>15</sup> Some have taken this to mean that Leander was once married, but surely it is only a statement of saintly modesty.

<sup>16</sup> Ps. 1.1.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Cant. 2.6.

to perish a brother whose sister He has espoused. Through you, perhaps, I shall be released from the spiritual debt which I have contracted;<sup>18</sup> so long as Christ loves you, He will not punish me for my sin. Sister, have pity, not only upon yourself, but also upon unworthy me, that I may win pardon from the same source whence you have attained glory. Many sisters will be in your company; with them, you will easily win what you ask for me. Even Mary herself, the Mother and guide of virgins, will intercede with her Son for your merits; and that she may not sadden you when you pray incessantly for me, she will lift me up from where I lie and will console me as I sorrow for my guilty conscience. Let not my hopes in you before God be confounded. At my urgent request, with my services, by God's gift in answer to my prayers, you have professed this calling. Therefore, may this chastity which shall bring you a crown also bring me a pardon.

Turn your eyes, I beseech, from the false images of the world. Look up to the heavens, where is your Bridegroom. Turn your thoughts there, "where Christ is seated at the right hand of God,"<sup>19</sup> "because all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes."<sup>20</sup> "Mind the things that are above";<sup>21</sup> where your life is, there also let your desires be; where your Bridegroom is, there also shall be your treasure. I would not have you enticed by the pleasures of this world; I would not have you beautified with the splendors of the flesh. The flesh that is beautified quickly creates new desires; the woman who dresses to appear attractive only attracts to herself the glances of young men. To wish to please the eyes of others is a harlot's desire; it does wrong to your heavenly Bridegroom, if you walk so as to please eyes full of lust.

Weigh, I beg you, the life of women who marry and of those who become nuns; consider each one's hopes and judge the

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Col. 2.14.

<sup>19</sup> Col. 3.1.

<sup>20</sup> 1 John 2.16.

<sup>21</sup> Col. 3.2.

path that each follows. A nun tries to please God, a married woman the world; a nun preserves the integrity of the virginity with which she was born, a married woman is corrupted by giving birth. What sort of virginity is that which does not remain whole, as it started to be? First of all, wrong is done to the work of God in that what He formed whole is corrupted and stained by lust. In you, God recognizes His work, you whom the world possesses but does not corrupt, whom God receives in the same image in which He created you. All things that now perish from the body will be restored at the resurrection, but virginity, once lost, cannot be recovered here nor brought back in the future. It is true that God instituted marriage, but it was in order that virginity might spring therefrom, that, by increasing the number of virgins, married women might gain in offspring what they had lost in marriage.

Both the root and the fruit of marriage is virginity. From conjugal union, certainly, is born a virgin, who, if she be not corrupted, increases the reward of marriage. Married women have a cause for rejoicing if their fruit is deposited in a heavenly storehouse. You too will receive the merits of our common parents: each parent will gain a reward from your honors: with you as their offspring and Christ standing by them, they will gain in fruit what they lost in the tomb.<sup>22</sup>

Recall, my sister, the misfortunes of human marriage, and close your eyes, lest you behold vanity. The first dangers of marriage are these: the corruption of the flesh, the disgust caused by the corruption, the weight of the womb when pregnant, the pangs of birth that often bring one to the threshold of death, wherein both the function and the fruit of marriage perish, as the mother and her offspring are both lost and all that nuptial pomp is brought to naught by the finality of death. What they thought to be cause for joy turns out to be

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<sup>22</sup> This is my interpretation of *in cespite*.

an occasion for death. Where will she go after death who has esteemed that all her joy lay in marriage? What will she do when she leaves the world after desiring to please her husband rather than God? What share will she have with Christ when she was anxious about pleasing this world? They take it ill when they are separated from their husbands; they lose their freedom along with their chastity when they compromise their captive virginity at the price of a dowry. What remains for a poor woman who sells her modesty? If, as sometimes happens, she loses this gift through loss of the world, then, she is without her chastity and has lost its prize too. You see how bare and poor she is in either case. Towards her husband she is afflicted with a double cause for fear—that she lose a good one, that she get a bad one. What, then, is the midpoint of happiness between these situations? What modes of artifice to please his eyes does she think up? With what strange odors does she sprinkle her garments to delight his senses? She even changes her own skin and alters her face by smearing it with all kinds of manufactured preparations, so that she will not be as she was born, and to deceive her husband by a different appearance not her own. See whether it is not a form of sorcery to think up ways of increasing another's lust. When she thus spoils her face, what sort of a spoiled mind do you think she has? She has committed threefold adultery: of the mind, for scheming such fraud; of the body, for using preparations to change her appearance; of her garments, for she smells of a foreign odor not her own. The virgin who is ignorant of such evils keeps her sex, but does not feel the compulsion of sex. Forgetful of her natural feminine weakness, she lives in manly vigor and has used virtue to give strength to her weak sex, nor has she become a slave to her body, which by natural law should be subservient to a man.

Happy is that virgin who gets her body from Eve, but without punishment! Eve for her sin well deserved to hear the words: "Your husband shall be your longing; and in pain

shall thou bring forth children."<sup>23</sup> You, by clinging to virginity, have shaken your neck free of such a yoke; you will not be bowed down to earth under the weight of conjugal necessity, but shall look on high and behold the heavens, that just as Eve fell by tasting forbidden fruit, so you may climb thither by spurning even what might be permitted to you. Eve tasted what was forbidden and lost her virginity.

A virgin may marry, but she who does not is numbered among the angels. "For at the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be as angels of God."<sup>24</sup> See how the maid who does not marry is compared to the angels. One may, indeed, bear sons, but those who have scorned such necessities hear Christ saying: "Blessed are the barren that never bore, and breasts that never nursed."<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, there it is said to married women: "Woe to those that are with child, and nurse in those days."<sup>26</sup> The feelings of a virgin, the thoughts she conceives in her meditations, are as children to her. Why, then, should a woman seek those whose birth will cause her pain, when she has holy thoughts upon which she may meditate and rejoice? "For fear of thee, O Lord," he said, "we have conceived, giving birth to the spirit of salvation."<sup>27</sup> Lo, fertile is the conception, unstained the progeny, useful the labor, when the offspring produced is one of good thoughts and pain is unknown. There are as many fertile seeds as there are holy thoughts; she conceives as often as she takes the Divine Spirit in holy meditation. Conception from above gives birth to virtues, and lest you think yourself sterile, you have as many sons as you have virtues. By one conception with the Holy Spirit, you will produce many births. The first child of a virgin is the virtue of modesty, the second patience, the third sobriety, the fourth

<sup>23</sup> Gen. 3.16 with phrases reversed.

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 22.30.

<sup>25</sup> Luke 23.29.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Luke 21.23.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Isa. 26.18.

humility, the fifth temperance, the sixth charity, the seventh chastity, that it might be fulfilled, as it is said, that: "The barren hath borne seven."<sup>28</sup> Lo, by one conception of the sevenfold Spirit, you have borne seven sons. "Do not say: See, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who shall observe my Sabbaths and shall choose what pleases me and shall hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; an eternal, imperishable name will I give them."<sup>29</sup>

Do you see, dearly beloved sister, how virgins hold the chief place in the kingdom of God? And not undeservedly, for they had contempt for the world's vanity and thereby reached the heavenly kingdom. Here, they begin the blessedness of human life, who never experienced bearing sons in pain; and those who rejected the sins of lust and the vile creations of husbands have rightly won marriage with Christ. I would not have you stirred by the pomp of wedding processions and the packed throngs of onlookers. For generally, such are overrun by men who attack woman's honor, though they were thought to be guardians of chastity. When women see themselves surrounded by so many types of men, they begin to think about what they do in their own beds with their husbands and they contemplate experiences with many which they have actually had with only one. I need not fear lest I be hated for speaking the truth. They may pursue me with all the biting fury of a bad conscience, but I must tell them, as they start out, what they must avoid in matters merely of physical beauty.

It is certain, my sister, that a woman who makes her clothes especially beautiful, makes herself smell of foreign perfumes, uses makeup to change her eyes, paints her face white against its natural tone, wears gold bands on her arms, places rings on her fingers, and causes her hands to sparkle with stunning

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<sup>28</sup> 1 Kings 2.5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Isa. 56.3-5.

gems and radiant brilliance, makes her ears heavy with metal, hides her neck with pearls and many other kinds of precious stones, weighs down her head with gold—it is certain, I say, that such a woman is not chaste, in that she has so decorated herself in order to strike the eyes of many, to move their thoughts, to entice their attentions. Even though for fear of her husband she may not openly commit adultery, yet she sins within her heart.

She is truly chaste who pleases her husband with simple clothes and good manners, who pleases God with her purity. The habit and garments of such are described by the Apostle Peter and the then correct way of life is shown in his preaching, when he says: "whose adorning let it not be the outward ornament, or of wearing gold, or of putting on robes, but the inner life of the heart."<sup>30</sup> And the Apostle Paul also meant the same, saying: "In like manner women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and dignity, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothing, but with good works such as become women professing godliness."<sup>31</sup> Anything which you know to be different from these precepts and at odds with them, you should avoid as you would the leaders of Gehenna and the chiefs of hell. For such women will use the persuasion with which they are filled, which speaks of sins, if not in words, at least in their very clothes. Avoid as you would an idol any woman who is adorned with gold and radiant with jewels; take her for an idol, not a human being, who presumes to befoul with varied preparations the physical being that was so well formed by God. Whence the Scripture also says: "Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 3.3, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. 2.9, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Prov. 31.30.



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### *Chapter 1*

I beg you, sister Florentina, not to allow into your company any women who have not made the same profession that you have, for they keep recalling to you the things they like and they will suggest to your ears the things which are attached to their own pleasures. Alas, my sister: "evil companionships corrupt good morals";<sup>1</sup> "toward the faithful you will be faithful,"<sup>2</sup> but far be it from you, sister, that: "toward the crooked you will be astute."<sup>3</sup> What have a married woman and a nun in common? She does not follow your ways, but rather loves her husband. She avoids your desire to leave the world, or even if she pretends to admire it, she is lying to deceive you. What has such a woman to do with you, when you do not bear the yoke of Christ upon your neck in common with her? She is different in dress, different in attitude. An instrument of Satan, she will sing you songs which will stir the attractions of the world and which will cause you to fall into the paths of the devil. Flee the Sirens' songs, my sister, lest, from delight of receiving into your eyes the enticements of the world, you turn from the straight path, and either knock your foot against a rock on the right side or be swallowed up in the whirlpool of Charybdis on the left. Flee the Sirens' songs, and shut your ears from the tongue of those who persuade evil ways. Strengthen your heart with the shield of faith when you

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15.33.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ps. 17.26.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ps. 17.27.

behold a woman whose interests are different from yours; arm your forehead with the sign of the cross against a woman who gossips about matters dissonant with your state of life.

### *Chapter 2*

If you have so solicitously avoided women of the world, then judge for yourself, sister, how you must avoid men. No man, however holy, should have any familiarity with you, lest the holiness of both should be ruined by repute or even destroyed by the frequency of seeing one another. For a woman who offers an occasion for committing an evil deed will fall from the love of God, and one who feeds the belief in her evil reputation, even though she does not actually do wrong, will fall from the love of her neighbor. When different sexes are placed together, they derive pleasure from those instincts with which they were born, and the natural flame is lighted by unnatural contact if it touches something inflammable. Who can ever take fire to his bosom and not be burned?<sup>1</sup> Fire and tow<sup>2</sup> are as objects naturally opposite, but when brought together, they nourish flames. The sex of a man and of a woman is different, but, if they are brought together, the result will be what is provoked by the law of nature.

### *Chapter 3*

And if holy men are so to be avoided, lest some harm come to the good reputation of both men and women, how much more strongly must young men be shunned who follow the shaded paths of temporal life? The devil has thrust them forward and put them into the sight of virgins to cause them to

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Prov. 6.27.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa. 1.31.

meditate at night on the shapes of those whom they have seen by day. Even though her mind be set against this and she rejects such images from her thoughts, yet, a recent sight or a physical vision returns these forms to her memory, and by seeing them she learns them so thoroughly that, no matter how brief the period that such an image has delighted her mind, what she has seen with her eyes will return again in sleep. Thus, a virgin's breast is wounded by the arrows of the devil and baneful love is planted in the heart, so that what she has recalled during the night, she wants to see again and to love on the next day. And so Satan's arrow passes through the doors of the eyes into the inmost heart, as the prophet said: "Death has come up through our windows."<sup>1</sup> The devil cannot creep into the inmost parts of our mind except through the feelings of the body. If you see something beautiful that stirs your desire; if some shameful song delights your ears; if a fragrant perfume arouses your sense of smell; if some charming flavor affects your taste; if your touch falls on some soft, neat form; then, carnal enjoyment is produced by these delights of the senses.

Both sexes are the work of God. Certainly, men are to be loved as the work of God, but at a distance and for their good works and for the sake of God who made them, not for their physical beauty,<sup>2</sup> not for their handsome appearance; for their bodies were taken from the mud of earth<sup>3</sup> and again will return to the earth and decay. Would you like to have definite proof of this? Do you wish to know what beautiful flesh is? Look at it three days after it has been buried and you will see how it lies in the tomb, although it was so beautifully resplendent in this world. Do not your eyes which desired to see him when alive now shudder at the sight of him, foul and swarming with worms? The odor which delighted and was so

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 9.20.

<sup>2</sup> Here begins the new text published by Vega. It includes the balance of chapter 3 and all of chapters 4 through 12, and 14.

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript has *terra caenicula*, which I take to be from *caenum*.

pleasant while he was alive has left him and is now fetid. Watch, then, lest you cause God much displeasure by loving God's work. All things that God made are good, but He Himself is to be loved above all.

Meditate on that outstanding example of virginity and glory of your state of life, who is the model and leader of all virgins—that is, Mary. It is believed that she avoided all contacts with men, because she was alone when the angel found her, because she trembled at seeing in the angel the male sex which she was avoiding. See what glory she attained to become the Mother of Christ by avoiding men. And if you, too, drive the forms of men away from your eyes and do not permit them to entice your mind, if you sit accompanied by holy thoughts in your cell and reject the tumult of this noisy world, “in quiet and in trust shall your hope lie.”<sup>4</sup> You, too, I say, will receive Christ in your heart; He will recline on your couch and enjoy your embraces. Then, you will say with the prophet: “Let peace come, let him rest on his couch”;<sup>5</sup> for Christ is our peace and His couch is a clean heart.

### *Chapter 4*

If a sister is ill, aid her with kind and zealous attendance. Remember what we read in the writings of the Apostle: “Who is weak, and I am not weak?”<sup>1</sup> In these duties, observe the rule of your Bridegroom, of whom it is written: “Surely, he bore our infirmities and endured our sufferings.”<sup>2</sup> You, too, should imitate Him and show an attitude of compassion; consider that the infirmities of the sisters and their weakness are your own suffering, that you may well hear the words of the Lord, who felt in His own Body the wounds and cures of His

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Isa. 30.15.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Isa. 57.2.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 11.29.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa. 53.4.

people: "I was sick and you visited me."<sup>3</sup> Then, may you deserve also to hear what follows: "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."<sup>4</sup> First, then, let the sick person be refreshed by the sweetness of your conversation. Then, whatever the flesh needs to lighten its infirmity, you should offer with generosity of heart and solicitude of service, that your words might be a sustenance to the sick, a receiving of medicine, as it were.

### *Chapter 5*

To those who love you, you should so repay the attention of their love that you may love in turn more than you are loved. Do not hate those who hate you; on the contrary, return good for evil, repay love in return for hatred, that you may conquer evil with good: "Love your enemies," says the Lord, "do good to those who hate you."<sup>1</sup> By your kindness, you will restore a rebellious soul to harmony if you return good instead of evil and render love to her who was trying to work hatred and evil upon you; so it is better that she who is evil should, by your good, pass into the number of good women, than that you, through another's vice, should pass into the number of the wicked.

### *Chapter 6*

Strive, my sister, and make effort that all your good works shall be adorned with the virtue of modesty. For anything good that a nun performs, she must do with modesty and honorable decorum: modesty is, so to speak, the nurse and mother of all of a nun's virtues. Modesty makes a nun patient

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 25.36.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 25.34.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5.44.

instead of angry, soft in speech instead of harsh. Modesty keeps a nun from boasting with swollen pride. Modesty holds a nun in check so that she follows the virtue of humility. Modesty excites a nun to hold to the moderation required by parsimony. Modesty keeps her from all sins, and a nun so prevented from sin, inspired by the fear and goads of modesty, is directed to the performance and the pursuit of virtues. Even bodily motion in a nun becomes honorable if filled with a sense of modesty, so that she will not petulantly turn her face in every direction, impudently lift her eyes, break out into shameful conversation, become disgraced by an unseemly appearance. In all ways, she is checked by the reins of modesty, is protected with a covering of modesty and decorum; freedom and authority, which are considered just in men, are vices for a nun unless checked by modesty.

### *Chapter 7*

A nun should have only her conscience free, not her voice nor her conversation nor her carriage. She should be of a sound mind before God, humble and modest in words and conversation and carriage, so that she may resist slanderers and evil speakers solely by the sincerity and purity of her conscience; she does not need to be justified before men by voice or by word. She should keep in mind the most virtuous Susanna,<sup>1</sup> who did not reply with words of justice to those who accused her of adultery, although she had that justice in her heart; nor did she repel the adulterers by any claims of her own, but with a pure conscience she entrusted herself to God alone with sighs and groans, for He is the One who sees within our minds; and thus she who did not wish to be defended by her own words was defended by the divine judgment, so that God was witness for her of the guiltless conscience that she bore

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dan. 13.

and as she was being led to punishment revealed the fact of her innocence.

### *Chapter 8*

But if a nun should pass over in silence and refuse to recognize those who slander and injure her rather than use her voice to repel them, lest she lose the chastity which she possesses in mind and body and speech, how much more attentively must she avoid slandering anyone else? That she may not incur the charge of cheating or theft, she should listen to the Apostle saying: "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves do wrong, and that to your brethren."<sup>1</sup> How could she be so bold as to slander another when she is not even supposed to answer in turn when slandered or accused of a crime herself? Joseph patiently bore the accusation of an adulterous mistress,<sup>2</sup> he did not repel it by denial; having a good conscience within himself, he freely endured the darkness of prison. How splendidly shone the brilliance of his good conscience in the confines of prison! Hence, we know that, even in chains, men are free if they have not a guilty conscience. But those who are guilty in their minds, even though absolved, are pressed by the dire confines of a prison. Joseph, I say, was unwilling to answer in view of his clear conscience, but he entrusted himself to God that He might be his judge as He was also his witness. Therefore, maid, under the guidance of such examples, you will advance if you imitate them.

### *Chapter 9*

And so it is a great sin for a nun to hurt others and be proud, so that wrath and pride corrupt the mind of one whose

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 6.7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gen. 39.



body is not corrupted by the flesh of others, and she who is not subject to men is prostituted to demons. Far better is the condition of a proud and angry woman, subjected to discipline under the power of a man, than that she should rage and rant under the power of the devil, free from man's yoke. For she, even though chaste in body, is impure in mind. And one whose soul is corrupted by demons with lust for men is not even chaste in body. For just as the soul is spotted by contact with the flesh, so the flesh is made base by the vices of the soul. And, certainly, the better part of man is his soul. The integrity of chastity must first be preserved in the realm of the reason, which is the noble part of the soul; in order that the soul, free from vices and enriched by the integrity of the virtues, may keep the flesh subject to it and its own laws and may impose upon the subjected flesh the chastity which it itself bears. The true virgin is the one who is neither subject to the devil in her mind nor to man in the flesh. Praising such a woman in the *Canticle of Canticles*, the heavenly Bridegroom sang to her: "You are beautiful, my beloved, and how lovely,"<sup>1</sup> "besides what is hidden within you";<sup>2</sup> beautiful, not for the appearance of the flesh, but for the integrity of her chastity, for the parts that are hidden within are the virtues of the mind. And the Psalm, extolling a virgin with praise, says: "All glorious is the king's daughter within."<sup>3</sup> Within is the glory of the virgin, that is, in the secret of the mind, where her soul is bedecked with the grace of the virtues, flowered with the beauty of chastity; therefore, she is comely and well adorned.

### *Chapter 10*

Just see how many pages we have already filled in this book, my sister! Therefore, compose your mind inwardly, my dearest

1 Cf. Cant. 4.1.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Cf. Ps. 44.14.

Florentina, in all ways and adorn it with the flowers of the various virtues. Wear that habit of the mind that will delight the only Son of the heavenly Father, and, neglecting the beauty of the flesh, beautify the mind alone with holy ways; that wherein the carnal please the carnal, you may be all the more displeasing to the eyes of the carnal and you may pursue with all care and diligence the contemplation of the divine that renders you beautiful. For then, you will be truly adorned if you love, not the outer, but the inner habit; and then, you will be well dressed if you have tried to attain splendence of the mind rather than flashiness of garments. Do not wear stunning clothes, anything having a pleat, for the eye is curious before and behind, and do not wear dresses that billow. Be careful of clothes carefully and diligently patterned and bought at a very high price, for that is care of the flesh, that is the eager desire of the eyes. Rather wear the sort of clothing that will not attract the attention of men to you or make you noticeable to them, but which will prove you innocent before God; that the integrity of a good mind may be recognized through the simplicity of your habit. You should be frightened by the prophet who brought accusations and terrible charges against virgins and those who like to show off in their manner of walking, saying: "Because the daughters of Sion are haughty and have walked with necks outstretched, ogling and mincing as they go, their anklets tinkling with every step, and moved in a set pace, the Lord shall make bald the scalps of Sion's daughters, and the Lord shall bare their heads."<sup>1</sup> "And instead of perfume," he said, "there will be stench; instead of the girdle, a rope; and for the coiffure, baldness; for the rich gown, a sackcloth skirt."<sup>2</sup> Following this warning, use garments that cover the body, that conceal a maidenly decorum, that keep out the rigors of cold; not those

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isa. 3.16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 3.24.

that produce the incentive and capacity to fleshly lust. Excel other women in the virtues of your mind, not of your clothes.

### *Chapter 11*

I have been commanded to reveal the excellence of your mind to you, dearest sister. Be humble after the law of your Bridegroom who, being equal to the Father, "humbled himself, even to our death and appearing in the form of the human body."<sup>1</sup> He who was not subject to death became humble "even to death" in accordance with the nature of mortals. O proof of infinite humility! The true God become true man! The mighty God beaten with whips; the Most High hung from the Cross! He bore all this for our salvation, without taunting in return those who taunted Him, without becoming angry with those who were ungrateful, but rather, at the moment of the Cross, He prayed for those who crucified Him and said: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."<sup>2</sup> You, certainly, if you love your Bridegroom, must observe His death, must picture in your mind His humility, and must press solidly to your intellect as on a coin the virtues which He bore in the flesh after the manner of man. Do not fear to imitate Him because He is God; but remember that He is more to be imitated because He is man. This He did and this He taught; He judged it possible to be done.<sup>3</sup>

### *Chapter 12*

Not only must you not torture and torment any sister, but you must endure patiently and bear humbly any wrong

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Phil. 2.8, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 23.34.

<sup>3</sup> This chapter follows the Monte Cassino manuscript, which has a fuller text than that of the Escorial.

that you suffer. "By your patience you will win your souls,"<sup>1</sup> says the Lord. For the anger of a harmful sister will be better subdued by your patience; it should not be inflamed by a harsh reply; and so it will happen that she who was angered will become, by your example, humble and quiet when she sees you patient and humble; and thus her salvation is added to your credit, for, by patient endurance and humble forbearance, you will have made her patient and humble. Exult over the triumphs of souls, be saddened over their downfalls. Imitate those who triumph and encourage them by your words to triumph even further; if they are lazy or addicted to the pleasures of the flesh, arouse them to good living and good deeds by your action. Be not well-taught in speech but deserving of reproof in deed, but rather let your words be preceded by good deeds, that you may show by deeds what you have taught by words.

### *Chapter 13 (4)*

Now, sister Florentina, shall I tell you what I think about food, of which you, because of physical weakness, partake even less than reason would dictate? Let moderation be observed in you so that, if a weak body must be granted some relaxation from fasting, yet, at the same time, the will must not be relaxed. If a weak body deserves some indulgence, it is not the practice of eating which is at fault, but gluttony or the lack of moderation, as when you take more than you need or desire something which you could live without. The intemperance of the appetite is threefold: if you desire too avidly what is forbidden; if you seek too carefully what is not permitted, or even what is permitted, and have it prepared with special care and expense; if you do not observe the regular time for eating. The first-begotten men lost the delights of

<sup>1</sup> Luke 21.19.

paradise and the rewards of immortality because they desired what was forbidden;<sup>1</sup> Esau, because he sought too eagerly what he was allowed to have, lost his birthright;<sup>2</sup> and animals are without reason because they do not observe a regular time of eating. We have, therefore, proved that the excess of intemperance is threefold in that the first men tasted of what was forbidden; Esau lost his birthright because he wished to eat pottage; animals do not observe a regular time of eating and are, accordingly, without reason. Therefore, he who greedily devours even poor food is not abstinent. "Their throat is an open grave,"<sup>3</sup> said the psalmist. For he is soft and dissolute who spurns what is before him and delights in costly and foreign foods.

A fish is caught by being enticed with a hook. A bird falls into a net while trying to get food. Animals that are tough by nature's endowment fall into a pit from desire to eat, and what nature does not soften, food deceives. Do you, then, learn temperance and parsimony from the prayer and the examples of ancients: from prayer, because the Lord says: "Lest your hearts be overburdened with self-indulgence and drunkenness";<sup>4</sup> from examples, because David was unwilling to drink the water he wanted, since he recognized the danger of the blood of another man;<sup>5</sup> and because Daniel scorned the feasts of kings and lived on vegetables.<sup>6</sup> What you possess in common with your companions should be acceptable to you and you should not cause others to be intemperate; also, do not become a cause for scandal to those to whom you wish to set an example by encouragement and by proof of a good life.

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1 Cf. Gen. 3.

2 Cf. Gen. 25.29-34.

3 Ps. 5.10.

4 Luke 21.34.

5 Cf. 2 Kings 23.16, 17.

6 Cf. Dan. 1.12, 16.

*Chapter 14*

This, too, you should observe well, that you do not criticize another who is absent, nor whisper against nor attack nor criticize the life of another with intent to show evil or pride. It is a great evil before God to criticize one who is absent and to deride another's character. There is no love therein, but ill-will is evident, since, if you love, you ought to correct one who is present rather than to tear apart one who is absent. "Let the just man strike me and reprove me."<sup>1</sup> And Paul the Apostle said: "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was deserving of blame."<sup>2</sup> One who is present is corrected, the absent one is not criticized. If ill report has reached your ears about some sister, groan as though grieving over your own deeds. And since "we are all one in Christ,"<sup>3</sup> be compassionate as if to a member of your own body, and seek to cure the ill part, not to cut it off; correct such a one gently in your presence, that she may be cured; do not criticize her when she is absent, or you will sin and by your sin wound further her who is already wounded. Guard your heart with all care, lest you listen to carping and become accustomed to it. For she whom you criticize is your own member; she is the body of Christ. You should be all the more anxious for such a member, that the weak member may be cured by the stronger member, rather than aggravated by it.

*Chapter 15 (6)*

Your reading must be continuous and your praying uninterrupted. Your time and tasks should be divided, so that after you read, you pray, and after you pray, you read. Thus,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. 140.5.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 2.11.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 3.28.

you will constantly alternate between these two goods, so that you shall never be at leisure from them. But if there is manual labor to be performed or the body is to be refreshed by the partaking of food, let another nun read to you, so that while your hands or eyes are intent on work, your ears may feast on the grace of the Divine Word. If, while reading and praying, it is still difficult to keep our slippery minds away from the enticements of the devil, how much more easily is the human mind swept into vices when it is not held in check by the reins of continuous reading and prayer? Your reading should instruct you as to what you may ask for when you pray; and after you have prayed, inquire by reading again what you should ask for.

### *Chapter 16 (7)*

When reading the Old Testament, do not marvel at the marriages of those days, but reflect upon the large numbers of their children; nor upon the eating of meat and bloody sacrifices, crimes expiated by the death of the flesh, nor that one man was permitted to marry many wives. For what is not permitted now was permitted then, and just as marriages were permitted by law, so also was virginity preached in the Gospel. For the Hebrew race was completely cut off from contacts with other peoples and was delegated the task of prophesying Christ and the Church. That the Hebrews might not perish, all were allowed to marry in order to increase coming generations; and, since the people were carnal, they were fed meat in great quantity. Sacrifices of animals were offered because they represented the true sacrifice, the Body and Blood of Christ. The Truth came, and the darkness was dispersed; the true sacrifice came, and the sacrifice of animals ceased. The Virgin, Son of the Virgin, came and showed the way of virginity. All that you read in the Old Testament, you should

interpret in a spiritual sense, although it did actually happen; you must gather the meaning of spiritual knowledge from the truth of history. No longer is a man deprived of his bodily existence for sin, but the punishment which they inflicted upon the flesh with the sword, we inflict for carnal vices by the use of penitence. Pay no attention to the sound of the Canticle of Canticles as it comes to your ears, for it invites the carnal pleasures of love on earth, but, figuratively, it also represents the Body of Christ and the love of the Church. The ancients quite rightly forbade the reading of the Heptateuch and the Canticle of Canticles by those with their minds on the flesh, lest they become dissolved in excitements to lust and pleasure because they did not know the spiritual interpretation.

### *Chapter 17 (5)*

Let no man speak to you while you are alone and do not speak to any man<sup>1</sup> alone without two or three witnesses. Remember your Bridegroom, our Savior, who certainly did not fear the stain of sin, yet spoke to Moses and Elijah in the mountains in the presence of three witnesses, Peter and James and John.<sup>2</sup> So, also, when He brought back to life the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, He brought the same as witnesses, lest He give rise to false rumors.<sup>3</sup> And His disciples marveled that He spoke to the woman at Jacob's well,<sup>4</sup> and, in fact, they would not have marveled had the sight not been unusual, and Christ would not have spoken with the woman alone in their absence if they had not gone to purchase food.

<sup>1</sup> The Monte Cassino manuscript reads *woman*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. 17.3; Mark 9.3; Luke 9.30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mark 5.22ff., esp. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John 4.5ff.



*Chapter 18 (8)*

Fasts must certainly be imposed on well bodies, and what the rebellious flesh constantly struggles against by the law of vice must be made easier by constant fasting. The hard flesh must be subjected to fasts and so thoroughly held in check that it will be subject to the law of the mind and the commands of the soul like a maidservant. But, since you are weakened by long illness, if you relax your fast and take just enough for health's sake, you will not sin. She is to be considered better, however, whose health and strength do not need the remedies of illness. A nun who is well should not be scandalized if a sick nun is fed more freely and with greater indulgence, but she should consider herself better and more holy because she does not have to have the soft food that illness requires. A nun who needs softer food because of her illness should be humble in the sight of the others and should be sorry that she cannot do what the others do; and the abstinence which has been relaxed for a time should be credited to illness, not to virtue.

*Chapter 19 (9)*

Use wine according to the rule of the Apostle, for he said to Timothy: "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities."<sup>1</sup> When he says "a little," he shows that it should be used for medicinal purposes and not for drunkenness. For, in another place, the same Apostle speaks thus: "You have mentioned wine, you have mentioned every vice."<sup>2</sup> Drunkenness is a mortal sin; it is classed with homicide and adultery and fornication. Thus, he excludes drunkenness from

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 5.23.

<sup>2</sup> *Vinum dixisti, omne vitium dixisti*. There is no such quotation in Holy Scripture, where the word *vitium* is rare.

wine from the kingdom of God, just as much as adultery and homicide and other crimes. The Apostle confirms this when he says: "Do not err; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor the evil-tongued, nor the greedy will possess the kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup> See what an execrable thing is drunkenness, that it even drives its devotees away from the kingdom of God. See how terribly the prophet attacks those who are fond of wine when he says: "Woe to the champions at drinking wine, the valiant at mixing strong drink!"<sup>4</sup> And again: "Woe to you that demand strong drink as soon as they rise in the morning, and linger into the night while wine inflames them!"<sup>5</sup> Noe drank wine and fell into a drunken stupor and became naked in the more shameful part of his body,<sup>6</sup> so that you may know that the mind of man is so confounded by wine and the reason of the human mind is made so dull that it does not even have concern for itself, much less for God. Although the drunkenness and nakedness of Noe may contain the mystery of Christ's suffering and death, still it was a wrong in the literal sense. When Lot was soused with wine, he committed incest with his daughters<sup>7</sup> and did not know his mistake; from that passionate union came the Moabites and the Ammonites. And the Lord said: "No Ammonite or Moabite may ever be admitted to the community of the Lord, even to the tenth generation."<sup>8</sup> Hear how satiety of wine is to be avoided; how, even among the patriarchs, it was a cause for scandal and blame. So the nun whose body is strong will do well if she avoids the use of wine entirely. One who is weak or ill may use wine for medicine, not to get drunk.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 6.9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. 5.22.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 5.11.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gen. 9.20-27.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Gen. 19.30-38.

<sup>8</sup> Deut. 23.3.

*Chapter 20 (10)*

Do not use a bath to care for or beautify the body, but only for the sake of health. I say, use the bath when infirmity demands, not when the will urges, for if you do what is not necessary, you will sin. It is written: "As for the flesh, take no thought for its lusts."<sup>1</sup> Provision for the flesh arising from lust is a sin, but not when it is suitable for the recovery of health. Therefore, let not the pleasure of the flesh cause you to bathe too often, but follow the dictates of illness. You will be free from sin if you do what is necessary.

*Chapter 21 (11)*

Let your rejoicing of the heart in God be calm and moderate; in accordance with the words of the Apostle: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice."<sup>1</sup> In another place, he says: "The fruit of the spirit is joy."<sup>2</sup> Such happiness does not disturb the mind with the base act of laughter, but lifts the soul to the place of rest that is above where you can hear: "Enter into the joy of thy master."<sup>3</sup> One can usually tell what is in a nun's heart by her laughter. A nun would not laugh impudently if her heart were pure. A man's face is the mirror of his heart: a nun does not laugh wantonly unless she is wanton in her heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart," says the Lord, "the mouth speaks";<sup>4</sup> likewise, the face of a nun laughs from the abundance of a vain heart. See what is written about this: "Of laughter I said: 'Mad!' and of mirth: 'What

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1 Rom. 13.14.

1 Phil. 4.4.

2 Gal. 5.22.

3 Cf. Matt. 25.21.

4 Matt. 12.34.

good does this do?' ”<sup>5</sup> And again, in the same place: “Let laughter be mingled with sadness, and the end of joy may be sorrow.”<sup>6</sup> And the Lord says: “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”<sup>7</sup> And the Apostle spoke the truth to those insanelly joyful: “Let your laughter be turned into mourning.”<sup>8</sup> Flee laughter, therefore, sister, as a sin and change temporal joy into mourning, that you may be blessed if you grieve that you are a sojourner in the world; for those who mourn, according to God, are blessed and shall be comforted.<sup>9</sup> Know that you are a sojourner in the world, that your country is not here, but in heaven. If the servant of Christ was so eager that he said: “I wish to depart and to be with Christ,”<sup>10</sup> then, how great should be the transport of love shown by a nun, what streams of tears should she pour out in longing for her Bridegroom, until she is able to reach the embrace of Christ? She must not cease weeping copiously until she reaches Christ whom she desires to see. One mourned that he was a sojourner in this world, saying sorrowfully: “Woe is me that my sojourn is prolonged.”<sup>11</sup> Your heavenly Bridegroom will rejoice and receive you in His beloved embrace, if He learns that you are consumed with eagerness for Him; if you weep because you are absent from Him, He will console you when He comes.

### *Chapter 22 (12)*

The condition of the maidservants whom you have or shall receive through circumstance and of the sisters whom you receive by profession must not be aggravated in the bond of

<sup>5</sup> Eccles. 2.2.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Prov. 14.13.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 5.5.

<sup>8</sup> James 4.9.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Matt. 5.5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Phil. 1.23.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ps. 119.5.

slavery, but honored in the equality of their profession.<sup>1</sup> She who serves with you in the ranks of those having virginity in Christ should enjoy the same freedom that you have. We do not seek to challenge you to humility in order that we may raise them up in pride, but as long as you accept them as sisters, they will the more willingly be your servants, and they will offer their services, not as subjected to servitude, but as free in love. For, indeed: "There is no respect of persons with the Lord";<sup>2</sup> that is to say, in the distribution of faith, where both mistress and maidservant are equally concerned, where there is no preference for the mistress and reproof for the maidservant, they are baptized in equality and together partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. Although the patriarchs were very holy, when it came to wordly and temporal things, they distinguished between slaves and sons; the former were considered servants, the latter masters; but when it concerned the hope of future reward, they consulted the interests of sons and slaves equally, and both were marked with one circumcision.

### *Chapter 23 (14)*

Now, I shall bring my words back to you, sister Florentina, about whom I am concerned because of family ties. I urge you always to keep your mind equable and uniform, so that you who are well acquainted with the patience and poverty of Job will not be discouraged by adversity, nor, on the other hand, be lifted up by prosperity, for you have read that the patriarchs were wealthy in goods, but humble of heart. You will be blessed if you give thanks to God both in adversity and in prosperity, and if you consider the prosperity of this life as

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<sup>1</sup> Chapters 22 and 27 show a class distinction not admitted by Isidore, but found in Jerome and Augustine.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eph. 6.9.

smoke and vapor that straightway vanishes.<sup>1</sup> David was a king, yet, in spite of having numerous treasures and ruling countless peoples with a strong hand, he sang of himself as humble and said: "I am afflicted and in agony from my youth."<sup>2</sup> And again, he said to the daughter of Saul: "I shall walk mean and I shall appear mean before the Lord, who chose me rather than thy father."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, he also said: "I am a wayfarer of earth and a pilgrim like all my fathers."<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, do not take delight in earthly possessions, nor rejoice in worldly gains; and do not be saddened by losses. For it is written: "Though wealth abound, set not your heart upon it."<sup>5</sup> The things that are loved for the sake of possessing them cause the user pain when they perish; and so each one must be troubled by the sources of his carnal joy. Do not wish to be honored in the world like your heavenly Bridegroom. Do not wish to be called or to be chief among others when you read: "Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave,"<sup>6</sup> since the Savior Himself hid when the crowds wanted to make Him king.<sup>7</sup> How could He receive a kingdom from man when a perpetual kingdom with the Father was awaiting Him? But since He had come to teach humility, He declined men's honor. Remaining in the form of God, He humbled Himself for us, and He, to whom all things celestial and terrestrial bow down, became poor for mortals, that we might be enriched by His poverty.<sup>8</sup> Press on, then, in the steps where your Bridegroom led, and with unwearied pace follow the heavenly leader, lest He be unwilling to have you as His consort in the heavenly kingdom, when He proves by His

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1 Cf. Ps. 101.4.

2 Ps. 87.16.

3 2 Kings 6.22, 21.

4 Cf. Ps. 38.13; Ps. 118.19.

5 Ps. 61.11.

6 Matt. 20.27.

7 Cf. John 12.36.

8 Cf. Phil. 2.6-8.

deeds that you are unlike Him. This we say, that you should put little value on the possessions of the world and not too greatly desire them and not consider as great those whom you see to be rich in the world. The good should willingly scorn what even the wicked may have. God gives temporal wealth to the poor to whom He denies eternal wealth; He also gives it to the good, but to the ones who, as He knows, will not become proud therefrom. The good become rich through a propitious God, and through a propitious God they become poor; in either case, those who gladly accept the will of God are grateful to Him. When riches are given to the wicked, it is by way of punishment, that their joy may be turned to woe; and when they are taken away, they are removed by way of punishment, that they may grieve for their wealth. Both situations bring glory to the just man, punishment to the unjust.

What has this to do with you who have a Rule to follow? Behold the virginity and the poverty of Mary, who was so rich in the Lord that she deserved to become the Mother of the Lord, and was so poor in goods that, at the time of giving birth, she had the services neither of midwife nor of maid-servant, and the inn itself was so small that she used a stable for a cradle.<sup>9</sup> And Joseph to whom she was betrothed, although he was just, was poor also, so that he had to work for his food and clothing. At any rate, it is read that he was a blacksmith.<sup>10</sup> You have examples, follow them, that you fall not into the dangers of riches. "For those who seek to become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil,"<sup>11</sup> and into many useless and harmful desires, which cause a man's death. Those whose hearts are devoted to the Lord will gladly remove all these things from themselves. In fact, wealth is more apt to befall those who despise it than those who pursue it. "Seek

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Luke 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Faber ferrarius*; Vega (p. 64) says this tradition is also found in St. Hilary, presumably in the *Commentary on Matthew*.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. 6.9.

the kingdom of God," He said, "and all these things shall be given you besides."<sup>12</sup>

### *Chapter 24 (15)*

In view of your poor health, I dare neither to prohibit nor to allow you to eat meat. One who is virtuous, however, should abstain from meat. For it is a difficult situation to give nourishment to the enemy against which you are struggling and to feed one's own flesh to the extent of making it rebellious. If a nun uses the same things that people in the world use, it seems likely that she should do the things done by people in the world. When the flesh is nourished with meat, what can it do except rush into lust and deliver the wretched soul to the excess and barbarity of luxurious living? Wherefore some author has said: "The end of pleasures is corruption." And the Apostle takes note of a pleasure-loving widow to say: "She who gives herself up to pleasures is dead while she is still alive."<sup>1</sup> If we can barely by abstinence keep our weak flesh from suffering by the law of sin that dwells in our limbs, what will she accomplish who overburdens the earthly stuff that is her flesh in such a way that it can grow thorns and thistles for her? The eating of meat is an enticement to vice; and not only of meat, but also too much of other foods, for it is not the quality, but the quantity of food that is at fault. Anything that is taken to excess makes the mind heavy; and if the stomach is distended with too plentiful food, it dulls the faculties of the mind. A nun needs only to be healthy, not robust; her mouth should be pale, not ruddy; she should sigh from her heart before God, rather than belch undigested food. Those who need physical strength may enjoy the use of meat;

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<sup>12</sup> Matt. 6.33.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 5.6.



namely, those who dig metals, who strive in athletic contests, who construct the towers of high buildings, or who sweat in various types of physical labor—such may use meat to recover their strength. The nun who bears the defects of the body more with her mind than with her physical strength is a good nun. For what purpose could she take meat, except to have her wretched body swallowed up in the dregs of vices? But if compelled by weakness, she may take meat for medicinal purposes. A thing taken as medicine relieves pain rather than making it worse, for those who are skilled in the use of medicine prescribe it so that, when taken slowly, it relieves the sick person instead of giving him more pain. Hence, the truth of the saying of the philosophers: “Nothing to excess.”

### *Chapter 25 (16)*

I earnestly advise you to remain in the monastery, for you will profit from associating with many and, by seeing their virtues, you will become a virtuous nun. And if, from conflict of desires, a quarrel arises now and then in the congregation and spiritual nuns are sometimes saddened by the complaints of the carnally minded, nevertheless, there will always be some whom you may imitate in good deeds. Certainly, to tolerate the carnal is a proof of virtue; but to imitate the spiritual is the source of greatest hope. The carnal teach the patience of the spiritual and those who are holy give proof of good virtues, and so those whom she may patiently endure and those whom she may calmly imitate are both useful to a soul advancing toward truth. “You gladly,” said the Apostle, “put up with fools, because you are wise yourselves.”<sup>1</sup> And again, he said: “Now you the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please yourselves. Let every one of you please his

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 11.19.

neighbor by doing good for his edification."<sup>2</sup> Do not be scandalized by the complaints of the carnal, but be consoled by the life of the religious minded; and since you know not how long you may dwell in this world, you should be patient for the gift of celestial glory.

### *Chapter 26 (17)*

Avoid private life, I beg you; do not try to imitate those nuns who live in cells in the cities, who are bothered by many kinds of care; first, they have to please the world and not go forth in unseemly clothing; and they are troubled by worries at home and are busy obtaining a livelihood, and less involved in the things that pertain to God. The Church first conducted its private life after the fashion of the Gentiles, but after the apostles were unable to persuade the Gentiles to follow their way of life, the churches permitted anyone who came from the world to conduct his own private life and to use his own property. But in the time of the apostles, the Hebrews who believed followed the same fashion that monasteries now observe. Look up what is found in the Acts of the Apostles and you will find that I am telling the truth: "Now the multitude of the believers were of one heart and one soul, and not one of them said that anything he possessed was his own. For those who owned lands or houses would sell them and bring the price of what they sold and lay it at the feet of the apostles, and distribution was made to each, according as any one had need."<sup>1</sup> See that those who live under a Rule in the monastery follow the life of the apostles, and, if they follow their examples, they should not doubt that they will achieve their merits.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. 15.1, 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 4.32, 34, 35.

*Chapter 27 (13)*

What of the rule that all things shall be in common to all nuns who share the same profession? It is true and is a part of the law: that is to say, if they have equal strength. However, some distinction may be shown to an older nun,<sup>1</sup> in consideration of each one's ability. For division must be made to each according to need. She who could be honored in the world and was rich in worldly goods may be more carefully treated in the monastery; she who left costly clothing in the world deserves better in the monastery. But she who lived in poverty in the world and was needy of clothing and food should be thankful to be in a monastery where she is neither cold nor hungry; she should not complain of the greater indulgence shown to her who lived more prosperously in the world. If division is not made according to need, then she who was poor in the world becomes proud in the monastery and she who was powerful in the world is humiliated in the monastery. That is what happens when one does not clearly understand that those converted from low estate become proud and those born in a rank of distinction become aggrieved. If there is enough so that all may share alike, there is no reason why any should complain, since the distinction of age gives each the share she needs. But, you will say, why did she enter religion, except to become humble instead of influential? If, then, the one descends from fame to humility, will the other, who had nothing for which to be humbled, become proud instead of poor? Love tempers all things and brings them to the same terms of peace, so that she who abandoned power is no longer puffed up, and she who was poor and a servant is not broken. An older nun must be praised, however, if she has lived righteously with each one and has divided with each

<sup>1</sup> This unusual recommendation is from Augustine, *Letter 211*, as mentioned in Madoz, *Misc. Mercati* 290-292. The Latin of this Letter is in CSEL 57.356-371. There is an English translation by Sister Wilfred Parsons, S.N.D., in *The Fathers of the Church* 32 (1956) 38-51.

according to need. This applies to words, clothing, food, drink, and work for the sick and weak, that she who cannot bear a harder life may be treated more leniently. But the elder will deal as seems best with those who can bear a harder life, and those to whom she has been more lenient because of their delicate health or bodily weakness should not have the honors paid to older women if they have professed more recently. Although I have been addressing these words to you, my sister Florentina, we have digressed into an oration urging zeal on the part of most nuns; but we do not place a yoke on any one, we only advise an honorable course.

### *Chapter 28 (18)*

The possession of anything as one's own property, which in the men's monastery is a great offense, you should avoid as a serious stain, for it is certainly adultery, as it spoils a clear conscience by the wickedness of converting property to personal use. It is also theft when a nun, in a monastery where all things are common for all, presumes to keep for herself some things unknown to the others. It is open cheating, since she does not place her possessions in common, but by fraud secretly conceals a small part. The crime is one, but the contagions are many. Avoid the evil of such a sin as you would the precipice of Gehenna; avoid it as a path leading to hell. Judas, because he was drawn by cupidity to commit the crime of theft, even went so far as to betray the Lord and turn Him over. In short, although he had everything that the apostles had in common, he was not content with what was sufficient to all. What does the Gospel say of him? "He was a thief, and holding the purse, used to take what was put in it."<sup>1</sup> Remember also the examples of Ananias and Saphira, who offered to the Apostle a part of the price and concealed a part and were

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<sup>1</sup> John 12.6.

condemned by an immediate sentence,<sup>2</sup> and the punishment of their misdeed was not put off because of the terror of things to come. Any private property that is set off from the common possessions of the monastery must also be deprived of its share of life in heaven. Anything that your hand touches you should show to your elder; set it in common. Do not carry anything off by itself, for the example of Judas, the betrayer, and the judgment of Saphira are to be zealously avoided.

### *Chapter 29 (19)*

Never take an oath, always tell the truth; these precepts are to be observed equally. Although the carnal are allowed to swear from terror of fraud, the spiritual may never use oaths, even though they have a clear conscience. "Let your yes," He said, "be yes; your no, no";<sup>1</sup> any more than this is evil. So do not swear for good reason because that is evil. It is said to be evil because the need of an oath comes from an unsure conscience. It is necessary to extract an oath from one whose sincerity is in doubt. But why should you bind yourself by an involuntary oath when you are bound to show with your lips the sincerity of your heart? Take away the use of an oath for good reason and you will not swear falsely in evil. Speak the truth from your heart and you will not need an oath. For we read: "Be not accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls."<sup>2</sup>

### *Chapter 30 (20)*

Do not become accustomed to speaking with one nun and avoiding others. What is useful for one to know should be

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 5.1-11.

<sup>1</sup> James 5.12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eccclus. (Sir.) 23.9.

known by all. Hear what the Lord says: "What I tell you in darkness, speak it in the light; and what you hear whispered, preach it on the housetops."<sup>1</sup> That is, if anything is revealed to you in the solitude of your mind, speak it openly; and what you conceive in your heart make manifest to all. If what you say is good, why should one only be informed and not rather all? If it is a foul thought that you would be ashamed to have others know, you should neither think nor speak it. That is no longer a good thing which a nun speaks to another in private, as she keeps looking around so as not to be seen by others. "Everyone who does evil," says the Lord, "hates the light."<sup>2</sup> Hence, the wisest of the philosophers said: "All good deeds love to be brought to the light." Maid, is the reason that you speak secretly that you have nothing to boast of publicly? But though you deceive the eyes and ears of men, can you escape the knowledge of God? Another said nobly: "What you wish God not to know, you should neither do nor think." Therefore, let your conscience be innocent, your conversation free from blame. Do not delight in hearing or thinking what should be disdained, much less in speaking or doing such.

### *Chapter 31 (21)*

Now, we are guiding the ship of our oration into the harbor, and having traveled over a sea of words, we are setting anchor on the shore to rest; but under the breeze of your love, once again we venture onto the waves of words. I beg you, sister Florentina, and by the blessed Trinity of divine unity I beseech you that since you, like Abraham, have left "your country and your kinsfolk,"<sup>1</sup> you must not look back like Lot's

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 10.27.

<sup>2</sup> John 3.20.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12.1.

wife;<sup>2</sup> lest by your bad example you are made a lesson for the improvement of other nuns; and let the others see in you what they should avoid in themselves. Lot's wife became the foundation of wisdom for others, but for herself an image of foolishness, for her wrong deed harmed herself, but set others an opposite example. Let not your thoughts ever make you anxious to return to your native soil; if God had wanted you to live there, He would not have driven you thence. But because He saw it would be useful to your purpose, He took you like Abraham from the Chaldeans and like Lot from the people of Sodom. I admit an error on my part; I frequently questioned our mother, yours and mine, wanting to know if she was willing to return to her country. She knew that she had been removed for her own safety by the will of God, and she used to swear a solemn oath that she never wanted to see and never would see her country again and with many tears she would add: "My sojourn has given me to know God; I shall die a sojourner, and I shall have my tomb where I found the knowledge of God." With Jesus as witness, I will recall that it lay in her inmost desires not to revisit her country, no matter how long she lived.

You, too, sister Florentina, must avoid what our mother feared and must carefully shun the ill which she from experience avoided. I consider myself most unfortunate to have sent to the same place our common brother, Fulgentius, whose dangers I constantly fear and dread. He will be safer, however, if you keep safe and pray for him in your absence. You were taken away at such an early age that you cannot remember, although you, too, were born there. There is no recollection to stir longing in your mind, and you are happy that you do not know what you grieve for. I speak from experience when I say that that country has so completely lost its rank and its beauty that there is not a single free person left in it, nor is the land itself as fertile as usual, and that not

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2 Cf. Gen. 19.26.

without the judgment of God. That land, whence citizens were carried off and sent abroad, lost its fertility as soon as it lost its dignity. Behold, sister Florentina, how I tremble and show sorrow lest the serpent remove you from paradise and set you in that land which produces thorns and thistles, from which you would not be allowed once again to stretch forth your hand and to take and eat from the tree of life if you should desire to do so. I beg you with the prophet and admonish you with Jesus Christ as my witness, with these words: "Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear, forget your people and your father's house. So the king has greatly desired your beauty; for he is the Lord your God."<sup>3</sup> "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup>

Do not fly from that "nest" which the "turtle" found "where she might put her young."<sup>5</sup> You are the daughter of simplicity, for your mother was the Turtur. In one and the same person [i.e., Turtur], you enjoy the attention of many relatives. Consider Turtur as your mother;<sup>6</sup> pay attention to Turtur as your teacher; think your mother even dearer, who bears you daily for Christ with her affection even dearer than your natural mother. And since you are now free, lay yourself in her bosom away from every blast, away from every mundane storm. Let it be pleasant to cling to her side; let it be sweet now that you are grown up to hold the embrace that was so sweet when you were an infant.

Finally, I beg you, dear sister, to remember me in your prayers, and do not forget our younger brother, Isidore, for his parents rejoiced to leave him in the care of God and of his remaining brothers and sister, and when they journeyed to the Lord, they had no fear for his infancy. Although I love him

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ps. 44.11, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 9.62.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ps. 83.4. The Vulgate has "swallow."

<sup>6</sup> Vega (p. 9 n.), taking a clue from Florez, says that Turtur was the name of the superior of the convent where Florentina lived.



as my own son and would place nothing on earth above my concern for him and would give my life for love of him,<sup>7</sup> you should love him the more dearly and pray to Jesus for him more sincerely because you know that his parents were so tenderly<sup>8</sup> fond of him. I am sure that your prayer as a virgin will win the divine ears to our attention, and if you keep the pact which you made with Christ, your good deeds will win you the crown and Leander's exhortations will achieve your pardon, and if you persevere so to the end, you will be saved.<sup>9</sup> Amen.

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7 The Latin has *recumbam pronus*, which may mean less forcefully "would lie down to sleep with fond thoughts of him."

8 Reading *tenerius* with Florez for *terrenis*.

9 Cf. Matt. 10.22; 24.13.

## SERMON ON THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE GOTHs

*(Homilia de triumpho Ecclesiae ob conversionem Gothorum)*

The novelty of the present occasion makes this festivity more solemn than all previous festivities, for not only is the conversion of so many peoples a new experience, but also the joy of the Church is newer than usual. For the Church celebrates many festivities during the course of a year, in which, of course, it has the customary joy, but not a new cause for celebration as at present. It is one thing to rejoice in things always possessed, another to rejoice in these great gains recently discovered.

Wherefore we are exalted with even greater joy because we see that the Church has suddenly given birth to new peoples, and we may now be glad over the faith of those same ones whose hardheartedness once caused us grief. The existence of past trials has provided material for our present delight. We mourned while we were heavily burdened, while we were reproached, but our mourning has brought it to pass that those who were once a heavy load to us because of their lack of faith have now, by their conversion, become our crown. This is what the Church brings out in joyous gratitude in the Psalms, saying: "When I was in distress, you have relieved me."<sup>1</sup> Sara, although she was often desired by kings, was never stained with unfaithfulness,<sup>2</sup> but Abraham became rich because of her beauty; Abraham received wealth from those very kings who desired Sara. Quite properly, then, has the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. 4.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gen. 20.2.

Church, by the glory of its faith, brought over as gain for its Bridegroom, that is, Christ, the tribes which it had experienced as rivals, and by the very kingdoms by which it had been sorely troubled it has made its Bridegroom wealthy. Thus, although in the beginning she is torn, or bitten by the jaws of the envious, or downtrodden, she takes shape therefrom; although she is attacked, she becomes enlarged, since by her patience she either conquers or wins over her rivals. The divine words speak to her: "Many women have gathered together riches; you have excelled them all."<sup>3</sup>

It is not strange that heresies are called "women," but it must be noted that they are also considered "thorns"; they are women because they are generated from Christian seed; they are thorns because they have been nourished outside of God's paradise, that is, outside of the Catholic Church. This is proved, not by any conjecture of my own making, but by the authority of Divine Scripture, when Solomon said: "As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among women."<sup>4</sup> Do not think it remarkable that he called heresies "women," for he straightway calls them "thorns." Heresies, I say, arise either against a single corner of the earth or against one nation, but the Catholic Church extends throughout the whole earth and is composed of the society of many nations. Rightly do heresies gather their riches apart in the caverns where they hide, but the Catholic Church is visible to the whole earth and overcomes them all.

Rejoice and be glad, therefore, O Church of God, exult and arise as one Body of Christ, put on your strength and sing for joy, for your sorrows have changed to gladness and your mourning clothes to robes of gaiety. Lo, suddenly forgetful of your sterility and your poverty, you have at one birth borne innumerable peoples for your Christ, in that you make gain from your losses and profit from your persecution. So strong

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Prov. 31.29.

<sup>4</sup> Cant. 2.2.

is your Bridegroom by whose command you are ruled, that, although He allows you to be dispossessed of a few things, yet He lets you recover the spoils and even subjects your enemies to you. So a farmer or a fisherman, looking toward future gains, does not count as loss the seed he sows or the bait on his hook.

Weep no longer, then; grieve not that for a while you had lost those whom you now see returned to you with great gain. Exult in the strength of your faith, and in the service of your Head be of robust belief, as you behold how you have recovered what it was once promised that you would regain; for Verity itself says in the Gospel: "Christ had to die for the nation; and not only for the nation, but that he might gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad."<sup>5</sup> Proclaim as in the Psalms, saying to those who hate peace: "Glorify the Lord with me, let us together extol his name."<sup>6</sup> And again: "When the peoples gather together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord."<sup>7</sup>

How sweet is love and how delightful is unity you know well through the foretelling of the prophets, through the divine word in the Gospels, through the teachings of the apostles. Therefore, preach only the unity of nations, dream only of the oneness of all peoples, spread abroad only the good seeds of peace and love. Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord that you were not cheated of your desire, for now, after the winter's ice, after the harsh cold, after the austerity of the snow, like the fruit which is the delight of the fields and the joyous flowers of springtime and the branches smiling with the offshoots of leaves, you have suddenly and joyously recovered those whom you embraced for so long with constant mourning and continual prayers.

Therefore, brethren, let us be glad in the Lord with the full joy of our hearts and let us be jubilant in God our Savior.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John 11.51, 52.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 33.4.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. 101.23.

Henceforth, we may use the fulfillment of the past as proof that the things that are still awaited shall come true. This has already been said by the Lord in the words: "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."<sup>8</sup> Behold, we see that this has been fulfilled. Therefore, let us not doubt that the whole world can believe in Christ and come to one Church, since again we have learned in the Gospel by His reassurance: "And this gospel of the kingdom," He said, "shall be preached in the whole world, for a witness to all nations; and then," He said, "will come the end."<sup>9</sup> If, then, there remain any part of the world or any barbarian race upon whom the faith of Christ has not yet shone, we need never doubt that it will believe and will come into one Church, if we reflect on the truth of what the Lord has said.

Therefore, brethren, good has been put in the place of evil, and truth succeeds error, that love might again unite in the bosom of fraternity those nations who have been separated by pride and by diversity of language, and just as God alone is the possessor of the whole world, so also one heart and one mind shall exist in His possession. "Ask of me," He said, "and I will give you the nations for an inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession."<sup>10</sup> For this reason was the whole race of men descended from one man, that those who proceed from him might have one wisdom, might seek and love unity. Nature's course demands that those who trace their origin to one man shall love one another, and that men who are not separated by natural descent shall not fail to believe in the truth of the faith.

Heresies and schisms spring from the source of evils, and, therefore, whoever comes to unity returns from vice to nature; for just as it is natural for many to become one, so is it a vice to avoid the sweetness of brotherly love. Let us, then, with

<sup>8</sup> John 10.16.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 24.14.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. 2.8.

our whole hearts be lifted up in joy that Christ has restored to His friendship in a single Church the people who had perished from love of strife. In this Church, the harmony of love will again receive them. Of this Church, the prophet foretold, saying: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."<sup>11</sup> And again, he said: "In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it; many peoples shall come and say: 'Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob.'"<sup>12</sup> Now, the mountain is Christ, and the house of the God of Jacob is His one Church, toward which the concourse of nations and assembly of peoples is moving by this pronouncement. Of this, again, the prophet says in another place: "Rise up in splendor, O Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. Nations," he said, "shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you. Foreigners," he said, "shall rebuild your walls, and their kings shall be your attendants."<sup>13</sup> To show what was to happen to the nation or kingdom which has wholly withdrawn from the communion of the Church, he went on: "For the people or kingdom shall perish that does not serve thee."<sup>14</sup> Finally, elsewhere he said in similar vein: "So shall you summon a nation you knew not, and nations that knew you not shall run to you."<sup>15</sup>

There is one Christ the Lord and His Church, a holy possession, is throughout the world. He is the Head and the Church is the body, of which it is said in the beginning of Genesis: "They shall be two in one flesh,"<sup>16</sup> which the Apostle

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<sup>11</sup> Isa. 56.7.

<sup>12</sup> Isa. 2.2, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Isa. 60.1, 3, 4, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Isa. 60.12.

<sup>15</sup> Isa. 55.5.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 2.24.

understood: "in Christ and in the Church."<sup>17</sup> So long as Christ wishes there to be one Church of all nations, whoever is a stranger to the Church is not considered a part of the Body of Christ, even though he uses the name of Christian. That heresy which rejects the unity of the Catholic Church is to Him a concubine and not a wife, in that it loves Christ with an adulterous love, since Scripture says that there are actually two in one flesh, that is, Christ and the Church, in which there is no third place for a harlot. "One is my friend, one is my bride, only daughter of her mother."<sup>18</sup> Of whom, likewise, the same Church speaks, saying: "My lover belongs to me and I to him."<sup>19</sup>

Now may heresies inquire with whom they have committed adultery, or to whom they have given themselves as prostitutes, since they have withdrawn from the spotless couch of Christ; and insofar as we know that the bond of love is dear to Him, so much the more let us praise God in this assembly that, among the nations for whom the Blood of His only-begotten Son was shed, He has not allowed a single sheep outside the fold to be devoured by the teeth of the devil. Well may that ancient ravager mourn that he has lost his prey, for we see it is fulfilled as we have heard it foretold by the prophet: "Yes," he said, "captives can be taken from a warrior, and booty be rescued from a tyrant."<sup>20</sup> The peace of Christ has destroyed the wall of discord built by the devil, and the house which was divided into mutual slaughter is now joined by the cornerstone which is Christ. Therefore, let us say: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will."<sup>21</sup> Love cannot be outweighed by any treasure; therefore, with all joy is peace placed first, because love, too, has been made manifest, which is the beginning of all virtues.

<sup>17</sup> Eph. 5.32.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Cant. 6.9.

<sup>19</sup> Cant. 6.3.

<sup>20</sup> Isa. 49.25.

<sup>21</sup> Luke 2.14.

It remains, then, that we should all with one accord work for one kingdom and that, both for the stability of the kingdom on earth and for the happiness of the kingdom of heaven, we should pray to God that that kingdom and nation which has glorified Christ on earth shall be glorified by Him, not only on earth, but also in heaven. Amen.





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